SCIENCE FICTION Quarterly

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A DOUBLE-ACTION MAGAZINE



THE WORLD SHE WANTED

by Philip K. Dick

132 Pages of
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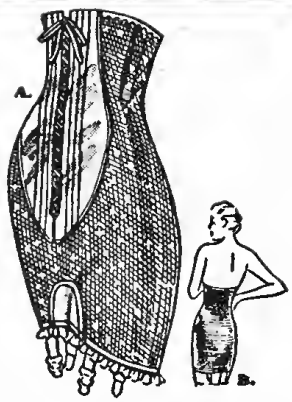
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318 Market St., Newark, New Jersey

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May 1953

SCIENCE FICTION Quarterly

Volume 2 Number 3

132 PAGES OF NEW STORIES — NO REPRINTS!

Featuring

The World She Wanted

by Philip K. Dick 43



Here, at long last, is the theory you've been looking for. If it's true, then someone is going to be very happy to learn about it!

Novelets and Short Stories

INTERMISSION TIME (Novelet) **Raymond F. Jones** 12
John wasn't enthusiastic about being part of humanity's great experiment.

SHE CALLED ME FRANKIE **Robert K. Ottum** 40
Here's the inside story on Oog, straight from the horse's mouth!

LIFEWORK (Novelet) **Robert Abernathy** 54
Kiin was exalted by the god, but when the god returned . . .

THE MUD PUPPY (Novelet) **William C. Bailey** 82
It was a wonderful machine, the mud puppy — only it wouldn't work!

TIME GOES TO NOW **Charles Dye** 99
It looked like a diving-suit, and Henry forgot to look for differences.

THE VISITORS **C. H. Liddell** 109
They were frightful beings — and they were afraid of something . . .

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EDGAR ALLAN POE — ANCESTOR (Special Article) **Robert A. Madle** 71

THE GOLDEN MIRAGE (Special Article) **L. Sprague de Camp** 75

THE MELTING POT (Reviews and Comment on the Fan Press) **Calvin Thomas Beck** 96

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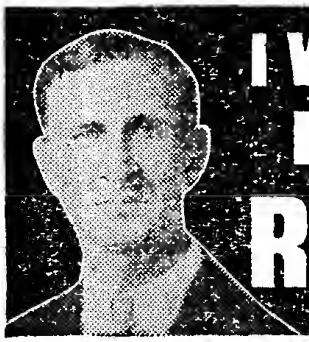
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Cover by Milton Luros, from "The World She Wanted"
Interior illustrations by Beecham, Luros, Murphy and Orban

ROBERT W. LOWNDES, Editor

Next issue on sale June 1st

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$10 TO $15 WEEK SPARE TIME
"Four months after enrolling for NRI course, was able to service Radios . . . averaged $10 to $15 a week spare time. Now have full time Radio and Television business."—William Weyde, Brooklyn, New York.



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"I recently switched over from studio work and am now holding a position as service technician. I am still with RCA, enjoying my work more and more every day."—N. Ward, Ridgefield, N. J.

WANT YOUR OWN BUSINESS?

Let me show you how you can be your own boss. Many NRI trained men start their own business with capital earned in spare time. Robert Dohmen, New Prague, Minn., whose store is shown at left, says, "Am now tied in with two Television outfits and do warranty work for dealers. Often fall back to NRI textbooks for information."



1. EXTRA MONEY IN SPARE TIME

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3. BRIGHT FUTURE

Think of the opportunities in Television. Over 15,000,000 TV sets are now in use; 108 TV stations are operating and 1800 new TV stations have been authorized . . . many of them expected to be in operation in 1953. This means more jobs—good pay jobs with bright futures. More operators, installation service technicians will be needed. Now is the time to get ready for a successful future in TV! Find out what Radio and TV offer you.



You Learn Servicing or Communications by Practicing With Kits I Send



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Keep your job while training at home. Hundreds I've trained are successful RADIO-TELEVISION Technicians. Most had no previous experience; many no more than grammar school education. Learn Radio-Television principles from illustrated lessons. You also get PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE. Pictured at left, are just a few of the pieces of equipment you build with kits of parts I send. You experiment with, learn circuits common to Radio and Television.

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A Department For Science-Fictionists

As I Was Saying...

THE RESPONSE to the inquiry about running fan-magazine reviews isn't conclusive as yet, but seems partly favorable; so, if I can get them in, I'll try it once—and let you decide as to whether the feature should be continued. Your votes and comments will determine the issue.

Further communications from readers on the subject of running material on our authors indicates that this is desired, but the general opinion favors the capsule comment on the author's previous appearances of note, rather than biography; most of you felt (and rightly, I think) that personality-sketches go better in the fan magazines.

Raymond F. Jones is the author of one of the best-received novelets to have appeared in our sister-publication, *Future Science Fiction;* I refer to "Doomsday's Color-Press", which led off our November issue. He's also to be remembered for his hard-cover novels, "Renaissance", and "Son of the Stars", published by Gnome Press, and Winston, respectively.

Philip K. Dick first came to my attention with a short piece in *Planet Stories*, July, 1952, entitled, "Beyond Lies The Wub." Since then, he's appeard in *Galaxy, Imagination,* and *If;* and it looks as if you'll be seeing him around. When I saw Luros' cover, I decided that here was just the right place to use an amusing notion that had occurred to me some time ago; and I'd say that brother Dick has done rather nicely with it—but you have the final say.

Robert Abernathy first appeared in the June 1942 issue of *Astounding Science Fiction,* with a memorable novelet entitled "Heritage"; readers of the oldtime *Science Fiction Quarterly* may recall his "Mission From Arcturus",

[*Turn To Page* 8]

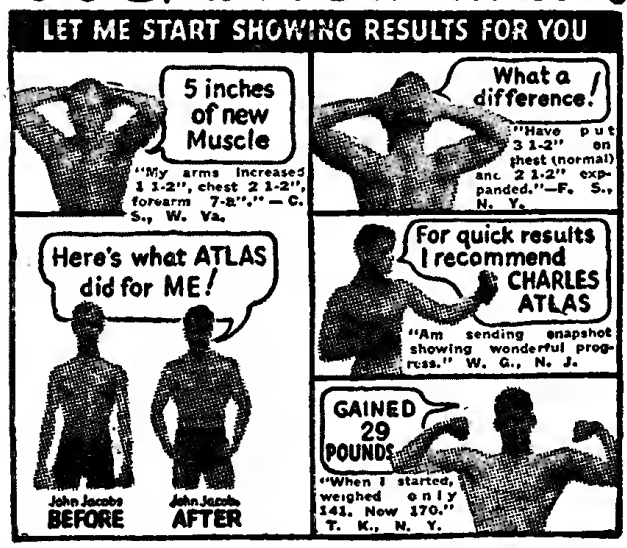


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which appeared in issue number 10, Spring 1943; newcomers seemed to like his novelet, "The Righteous Plague", which was one of the best-received items in our May, 1951, issue. (SFQ had no volume numbers, originally; May 1951 was Volume 1, Number 1).

William C. Bailey's first appearance in SFQ was with "The Prowler", in our November 1952 issue. We recall noting an appearance of his in *Other Worlds;* but, unfortunately, this was farther back than our present copies run, though too recent for inclusion in Donald B. Day's excellent "Index to Science Fiction Magazines", (without which we'd frankly be lost for important references, when we're about to make up this department). His " 'X' for 'Expendable' ", which appeared in the first issue of *Dynamic Science Fiction,* was greeted with loud cheers by many.

Breathes there the fan who knows not of L. Sprague de Camp? Well, possibly—after all, new enthusiasts are born each month. For such happy discoverers of new pleasures in reading, let me say that Sprague first appeared in story-print with a wacky and delightful novelet entitled, "The Isolinguals"—which had the misfortune of appearing in the same issue of *Astounding Stories* (September 1937) as part one of E. E. Smith's "Galactic Patrol". (Otherwise, this yarn might have been more notable at the time.) However, since then Sprague has authored full many a splendid tale and book, a number with the equally-renowned (in fantasy-fiction, that is; in his own field of history, etc., the gentleman is quite unequaled) Fletcher Pratt. Particularly outstanding are "Lest Darkness Fall", "The Undesired Princess", and "Rogue Queen". Readers have found his articles enjoyable for many years.

Robert A. Madle was co-author of "Did Science Fiction Predict Atomic Energy?", in our November issue; Madle's well-known in the fan-world, being a longtime member of the Philadelphia Science-Fantasy Society, and will play an important part in the shaping of this year's convention.

"She Called Me Frankie" is a "first" for Robert K. Ottum, and another illustration of the fact that a newcomer can break in, with a story that captures the editor's fancy. Some readers have suggested that I strive for a "first" in each issue; this is a fine idea, but you can't put discoveries of this nature on schedule; they come when they come, and that is that. All I can do is to extend the welcome-mat.

C. H. Liddell's last appearance in SFQ was in our November 1951 issue, with "We Shall Come Back". Oldtimers know that, for long and long, nearly every time a new name appeared on a science-fiction magazine's contents page, fans would say, "Hah, so ——'s taken still another nom-de-plume". Often they were laughably wrong; but in this case, they were right. (In other words, if you do not already know the better-known name of C. H. Liddell, I'm not supposed to tell you!)

Charles Dye, a New Yorker, is author of the novel, "Prisoner in the Skull", and has been appearing in science-fiction magazines with increasing frequency over the past two years. He first showed up in the February 1950 *Amazing Stories,* with a short story entitled, "The Last Orbit"; you'll see how his last story for SFQ came out (in the readers' estimation) on page 130.

If you approve the new cover layout—a design wherein the picture can run without any type appearing on it—please let us know. Many have asked for this, and your editor and art director managed to get an okay on trying the experiment; now it's up to you to support the team if you want the management to approve making this a policy. "Support" in this case means writing letters, or postcards—or filling

[*Turn To Page* 10]

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No need to be a mechanic! Easy directions & clear pictures show you how to get more speed, power & economy with only a Screwdriver! Tells of cheap gadgets that work miracles with any motor, a 1953 model or a junkyard derelict! Shows you how to **SAVE** up to **$500.00** a year, increase resale value of your car, reduce repair costs.

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One more thing; it would help a great deal if those letter-writers whose efforts were most appreciated by the other letter-writers and readers—and who therefore have been awarded original illustrations—would please write in and let me know their selections within a month or two after their names have been published. Reason: originals pile up, and space is short; my time and attention is marvelously and horribly divided; and every now and then someone comes around—someone representing a convention or conference, or whatever—asking if we can donate some originals. I don't like to turn down such requests; but it's often difficult to remember at any given moment which originals from past issues are free to hand out, and which should be retained for our winners. As things stand, the entire artwork for a number of past issues is still tied up, because I do not know which will be wanted by those who have won their choice. Have mercy, winners, and let us know which originals you want!

Letters

WHAT, NO FALLSON?

Dear RWL:

The latest issue of SFQ bounced merrily on its way in, the other day; and I return the compliment by bouncing back to you a letter, brickbat, brick, missile, or anything else you want to call it...

Perhaps I'm being repetitious, but it's not so much the *format* as it is the *reproduction*. The ink barely took on certain pages of my copy of SFQ. Can't something be done about it? This, however, hardly spoiled my enjoyment of Damon Knight's very thorough and analytical book reviews. *Astounding* is about the only other science-fiction magazine to have a good book-section. Oh, there are others, promiscuously strewn in nearly all of the presentday science-fiction and fantasy magazines, yet they merely skim and gloss over the surface. The reader is as much informed about books after reading these alleged "reviews" as he was before bothering with a perusal. I heartily approve of your department, especially the way in which Mr. Knight handles it.

de Camp's article, "The Great Charlatans", was chatty, informal, and moreso down to earth than he is usually wont to be. I would rather see L. Sprague devote himself to such forms of articles of a contemporary nature, than to essays of romantic near-legendary, albeit nearly unprovable, civilizations like Mu and Atlantis. They are most interesting, true, but Sprague has been at his best, and I'd daresay almost classical at times, when more prone to simplicity and less to complex theorems left for mere conjecture. I couldn't help being amused to find de C. still sticking to his guns with the incorrect usage of the Greek letter, *kappa*, in his English translation of proper Greek nouns. The millenium, though, had come when he finally included one unacceptable, or unrecognized word to the English language in italics, as all foreign, untranslated words should be.

I was disappointed that de Camp didn't even mention or give a line about Guy Fallson, otherwise known as the "Great I Am". To quote part of a blurb written about Guy: "Colossus of rogues! Monumental hypocrite! Napoleonic swindler! Ruthless, swashbuckling, brazen egoist... He started on a shoestring and made himself a fortune. His marriage was his first business deal. He made himself feared by captains of industry, finance, and politics... Beginning as a promoter of worthless real estate and crooked lotteries, he developed a black talent that won him vast power...but he double-crossed everyone else. He posed as a man of honor and distinction, as the champion of virtue, while he exacted tribute from vice, gambling, and the filth of scandal..." An article about this character alone would be more than interesting. I still like Balsamo-Cagliostro better when acted by Orson Welles!

Your editorial, as usual, was one of the highlights of the issue. I, let it be known, am all for a *fan-magazine department*, and no doubt most other fellow-aficianados out there are also for it!

I agree with R. R. Anger that articles shouldn't be rated along with the stories. This is as unfair to the writers of fiction as it is to those who write the articles. Therefore in my rating the contents, I leave out all the non-fictional sections.

[*Turn To Page* 117]



Do Unseen Powers Direct Our Lives?

ARE the tales of strange human powers false? Can the mysterious feats performed by the mystics of the Orient be explained away as only illusions? Is there an intangible bond with the universe beyond which draws mankind on? Does a mighty Cosmic intelligence from the reaches of space ebb and flow through the deep recesses of the mind, forming a river of wisdom which can carry men and women to the heights of personal achievement?

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. that unmistakable feeling that you have taken the wrong course of action, that you have violated some inner, unexpressed, better judgment. The sudden realization that the silent whisperings of self are cautioning you to keep your own counsel—not to speak words on the tip of your tongue in the presence of another. That something which pushes you forward when you hesitate, or restrains you when you are apt to make a wrong move.

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Doris was fascinated by the layout here, under the dome, but John's fist clenched in anger . . .

Feature Novel
Of Human Destiny
By Raymond F. Jones

(illustrated by Paul Orban)

INTERMISSION TIME

The Alpha Colony on Planet 7 was an artist's paradise; here, all his wants and needs would be taken care of, and John Carwell could compose as he wished. And all knew that this was part of a great project for humanity's future. But John couldn't forget the girl in the Control-colony, living out in the jungle...

THE PARTY was like a wake; the talk was quiet, the faces of the guests waxy. Some of them regretted coming, John Carwell thought. Some of his best friends. He didn't blame them; there's nothing appropriate to say to a man at his own funeral.

Doris had insisted on the party, and she was struggling mightily to produce an air of celebration. The trouble was that in her it was real.

She sat at the piano, her fingers playing a twinkling song of

springtime. Guests were seated about, or standing in small knots, their attention on her playing. But it might as well have been a funeral march for all the delight reflected in their faces.

John moved silently through the wide doors to the balcony overlooking the garden. In the darkness he almost collided with another figure standing by the railing. He grunted apologetically. "Sorry, George. Didn't see you standing there."

The figure of George McCune, concert agent for John and Doris Carwell, moved like a bulbous shadow. "I'm out here weeping," he said. "That music—it turns me over inside when I think I'm not going to hear it any more."

He placed a broad fat hand on John's shoulder. "I've said everything; I've given you all my arguments. So now I give you my congratulations.

"It's a wonderful thing you're doing, you and your sister. A wonderful thing—and the biggest damn' piece of foolishness I have ever heard of in a life that has been long, and composed of much more than ordinary foolishness. What can I say to show you how crazy—how utterly damn' crazy—"

He spread his hands in resignation and clamped them to his side. "Have you tried to show her, John?"

John's arm went fondly across the agent's low broad shoulders. "There's no use making any more talk," he said quietly. "Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow Doris and John are but guinea-pigs."

George puffed violently and pushed himself free of John's hand. He looked towards the horizon, across the city of life and ruin. "Planet 7," he muttered. "Human Developments!" It's wonderful that they should take morons and pigs, and make human beings and geniuses out of them; but what in Heaven's name has that to do with John and Doris Carwell?

"You and your sister have genius now, at your fingertips. With your music you make people happy. Is



there any greater genius than this?

"Ah, but we've been through this before. Tell me that you have changed your mind and made Doris understand. Just say the one word that will make an old man happy."

"We leave at noon, tomorrow," said John.

THE NOTES from the piano were like a thousand tiny bells in the air beside them. The two men listened, and dreamed of a fresh spring world uncharred and overflowing with life.

"Doris made the decision," said John. "Ever since our folks died when we were kids, she's been the one to come up with the answer—for both of us. She's older. Things have always worked out the way she said; maybe this will, too.

"I wouldn't go, of course, if it weren't for her; but I'd be far less than half the Carwell piano team if I stayed. You couldn't book me three times a year, alone."

"Listen, boy!" George almost bounced with sudden inspiration. "You could have them standing in the aisles. I *know*. I've watched you—you've got a fire that Doris can never show. Her playing is brilliant—and cold; she's never let you show the things that are inside you.

"Tell her you've decided to go it alone; tell her you're going to live

your life and play your music the way you want to. Then she'll back down, call this Human Developments thing off, and let you lead the concerts the way you always should have."

"You know Doris better than that. She wouldn't back down for the Devil himself, and I'm no Devil!"

"*What* are you?" George whispered with a sudden bitterness that shocked them both. Then, "Forget it," he said quickly. "I didn't mean that the way it sounded, John; let's go inside."

"No—I'll stay out here. It's Doris' show, anyway."

"Always Doris' show!" exploded George. "But this performance I will not accept. I will persuade her myself. Tomorrow you will play in the auditorium; I will announce it on the radio that you have come to your senses!"

He marched away—squat, resolute, ridiculous, lovable. Marched as if he had not already a hundred times explained to Doris the folly of leaving a career on Earth for the fantastic experiments being run on Venus.

John leaned on the iron railing, staring over the city at the evening star. In a moment he heard the music stop, and the babble of voices. He closed his ears to the debate that fumed again; he was sick of it. They were going, he and Doris. He didn't understand why; maybe Doris did.

Out there on Planet 7, in the Alpha system, they were trying to make a new man because the old man had failed. Homo sapiens had burned up a world.

In the hundred years since, only a quarter of the Earth had become habitable, and its population was less than thirty millions. A sober, stunned, and bewildered humanity rebuilding amid the ruins.

They had accomplished much in that century. There were cities again; there was space-flight; then overdrive and the stars; and the mutants had been wiped out. There was a single coordinated government that united the efforts of all races and tongues.

It was the ruins that did it, John thought. No matter how drunk or how elated and forgetful man became, he could never get away from the ruins. A thousand years of rebuilding would not cover them all.

But Doris said this was not enough; she said that, in time, men would forget even what the ruins stood for and blast them anew in fresh wars of their own.

Maybe Doris was right. She had always been right, John thought.

He thought of George again. *What are you?* George had asked. John wished he had some kind of answer to that question. He had seen it before—in the eyes of those who watched him and Doris together.

He couldn't understand exactly why the question should be asked. It didn't seem unnatural that he should find his answers to living in the stronger and more brilliant mind of his sister. He felt sometimes as if some blast of energy had shattered all but a minimum of his own thinking circuits, leaving him as dependent as a robot.

He knew the moment when that happened, too—the day he learned their parents were dead and there was no one in the world but him and Doris. He could remember the moment like a great curtain drawing across the portion of his mind where life and initiative and enthusiasm were charted.

He was eight then; Doris was sixteen. It hadn't done to her what it did to him. She'd had strength enough for both of them, and it had been hers that he'd drawn upon ever since.

So—going to Planet 7—

He had no real hope or feelings in the matter. He felt blank to all the torrent of argument that swirled about him. That belonged to the portion of his mind that had been walled off so long ago. Doris said it was right; his own mind could hold no other opinion.

And he could not answer George's

question, because he did not know how else he could be.

THE BABBLE of sound within the room was suddenly split by an angry voice. John looked in at the tall, dark-haired figure of Mel Gordon by the piano.

"Shut up, all of you," Mel said. "Doris knows what she's doing. Most of the rest of us haven't got the guts to think about it, let alone carry it through. Shut up and leave her alone!"

He whirled and strode from the room to the darkness of the balcony. All of them understood the explosion. Mel Gordon didn't want Doris to go, either.

Mel saw John watching from the balcony shadows. "I'm sorry I blew my stack," he said.

"We'd all feel a little better if we did the same," said John. "Did you get a report on your re-application?"

"They turned me down again. Mel Gordon—not even good enough for a guinea-pig. Who knows what will happen when they get through tinkering and tampering, and trying to make homo superior out of you and Doris? Me, they'd have a chance with; but Doris is already what they are trying to find."

"Have you asked her to stay?"

"I haven't the right to ask that; no one has. How many of the rest of us know what we want to do with our lives?"

He looked back into the room as the noise of the stirring guests indicated their departure. "I guess I busted up your party. Sorry, John."

"You didn't bust it up; they didn't like coming to this funeral anyway. They understand how you feel."

"Yeah! Good old Mel—carry the torch high. John, when you get up there, tell her I tried to come, will you? Tell her I tried."

●

After the guests were gone, they faced each other in the faintly embarrassing vacuum that surrounded them always when they were alone together. Doris sat again at the piano. Her fingers moved in the melody of a Brahms lullaby, so softly that it could scarcely be heard.

She was the most beautiful thing that had ever lived, John thought. At thirty she had something of the wisdom of a mother, and of the passion of first love. But she knew neither love nor motherhood, nor would she; she lived on some far, cold plane where human destiny was determined by sheer brilliance of reason, and emotion was unknown. He didn't understand such a place; he didn't understand such a mind.

He only knew that Doris was not often wrong.

He was aware that she had stopped playing and was looking at him. There was wistful yearning in her eyes that startled him by its unfamiliarity. "You *do* think it's right that we should go, don't you, John?" she said.

"Sure—it's all settled: you haven't changed *your* mind, have you?"

"No! It's just that sometimes I wish you could understand how I feel—just a little."



THERE WERE almost a hundred volunteers waiting behind the gates of the spaceport, each the nucleus of a cluster of friends and relatives saying last goodbyes. Some of the groups were quiet, waiting for the inevitable; others were stormy pools filled with last minute tears and clinging.

The sky above the port was clear-specked and shining, as if Earth herself were putting on a last and final appeal to the emigres to think again of what they were abandoning. John

watched the little whirlwinds on the field and wondered if the dust of Planet 7 had the hot, dry smell of old forgotten lanes in summertime; if you could imagine faces and horses and ships of the sea in her clouds.

He stood near the center of their group. Even the buzz of human voices was a kind of music, he thought. But he wouldn't hear these voices—not ever again.

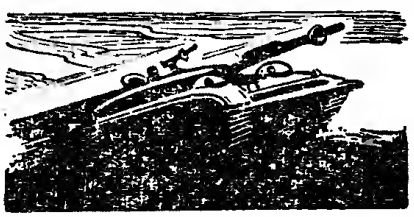
He edged away from Mel's silent pleading; the bustling, explosive fury of George's last minute demands that Doris come to her senses; the mumbled congratulations of the two score fellow musicians; the whine of several hundred fans and musical followers.

It was not hard to escape. Attention was on Doris, incredibly beautiful and untouched by the fact that she was leaving Earth today and would never see it again. John felt that none of the talk was addressed to him.

He watched the star-ship slowly moving to its launching-base, towed by chugging tractors that strained like insects against its mass. He tried to look over the heads of the crowd to see others who would be his own companions on the journey.

And then he caught a startling movement of color threading between the islands of humanity.

It was a girl in a flame-red dress. At the gate she stood on tiptoe, clutching the iron bars like an eager child. He strolled to the gate and stood beside her. "If you're looking for anyone in the crowd, I'm afraid you'll have a hard time of it, now," he said.



"Oh, no." She glanced up quickly. "*I'm* going to get on the ship. Are you going, too?" Her waves of dark hair trembled and the almost-black pupils of her eyes glistened with light.

Whatever the scientists on Planet 7 considered worth passing on to the future, John hoped they would preserve that light. He had never seen its like before, he thought. "Yes, I'm going," he said.

They watched the big ship. It was motionless now and mechanics scurried ant-like at its base. Hatches opened ponderously.

"Do you think we can help?" asked John. "Do you think humanity a thousand years from now will be better for our going?"

The girl laughed. "I don't know about humanity a thousand years from now; I'm going to help myself."

As if his silence reproved her, she turned her head defiantly. "And anyway, *I'm* humanity! And they don't care *why* you go, as long as you have enough of the qualities of a guinea-pig."

"I wasn't going to scold you," he said; "your attitude is refreshing. It's just that it's customary to speak with a long face, and in solemn tones, of the great things that Human Developments is doing for the future of mankind."

"No one connected with the whole thing cares a hoot about the future of mankind a thousand years from now. The scientists are concerned because it's their business to manipulate guinea-pigs; and they have finally conceived the most colossal guinea-pig show ever dreamed up.

"The rest of us have our own reasons. Some of us are running away; some are going for the fun of it. And others—well, you'll see when you get there. It isn't the noble, self-sacrificing bunch the newsmen like to picture. After all, no one ever comes back to tell what it's like out there."

JOHN STARED at the girl. She was as challenging as a winter morning. And could she be right? He knew there was no nobility in *his* going, but what would she make of Doris' high-minded purposes?

Doris didn't have to run from anything. Her mind was swift and sharp enough to encompass the whole universe including humanity a thousand years from now. The girl's swift estimation of her fellow travelers would hardly apply to his sister. He'd have to see that they met aboard ship, he thought.

But now the gates rumbled aside as the guards removed the pin-locks and chains. Slowly, at first—as if almost reluctant to embark upon the course that had been so carefully and greatly planned—the wave of emigres moved over the field, while guards held back the protesting, well-wishing friends and relatives.

John looked back towards Doris and felt the surge of the crowd separate him from the girl in the flamered dress. "I'll see you aboard ship!" he called. "I'm in Alpha Colony section."

Her smile, swiftly receding through the crowd, was wistful. "I won't be seeing *you*. I'm going as a Control."

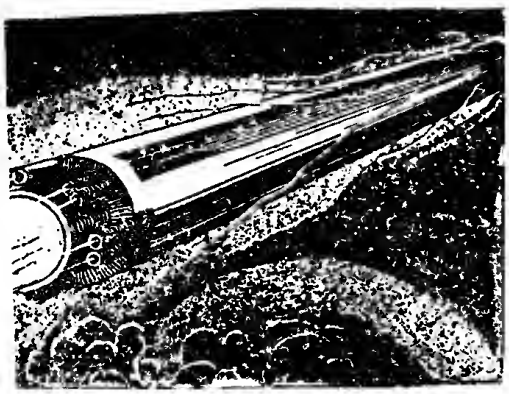
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He found Doris cutting her last ties with Earth carefully and dispassionately. She patted George on the cheek as if saying goodbye to a fond puppy. She gave Mel a cool and sisterly kiss. And then she was taking John's arm and hurrying him towards the gate.

The ship had a frightening smell. It caught John in the pit of the stomach and he stopped midway along the elevator ramp. It was not the friendly smell of coal or oil or gasoline, but the sharp ozone sting of outer space, and counterfeit worlds where it was unnatural for men to be.

He glanced upward at the great scarred tube. He had seen the shining arcs in the night sky, but he had never been this near to a ship before. He glanced at his own slender white hand resting on the railing and wondered what kind of men could build such ships as these.

"Move along there!"



He closed his mind to wonder and concentrated on the steel deck of the ramp beneath his feet.

IN HIS STATEROOM, John sat down carefully on the bed near the large main port. He had a sudden curious feeling of numbness as if the whole world were something that was happening *to* him.

He saw in the west, beyond the city, the mile-wide crater now filled with water, like some pleasant lake with the afternoon sun glistening on it. He couldn't see the high, electric fence that walled off the entire area as too contaminated for human occupancy. He didn't know how, but he had a feeling that it concerned him, deeply.

Below the steel column of the ship, the ground—almost two hundred feet away—was littered with moving people, movements at once erratic and purposeful. They were something happening to him, too.

And the girl, the girl in the flamered dress. *She* had happened to him.

It had always been that way; it was a little frightening to recognize that all his life things and people had happened *to* him as if he were a prop on some fantastic stage.

He stood up and tried to shrug off the feeling. He heard Doris, unseen beyond the door of her adjacent stateroom, moving luggage, snapping lids, and closing drawers with shattering efficiency. Things didn't happen to her; *she* did the shaping. The world

of Doris Carwell was exactly the way she wanted it to be.

Without unpacking, John shoved his hands in his pockets and strode from the room. He made his way through the corridors, unaware of where he was going, half-angry with himself for not knowing. Abruptly, he found himself in the main lounge. The huge hall was dark and, he thought, unoccupied. Then he spotted a familiar flash of color in a far corner.

It was too much to expect, but there she was, the girl he had met at the gate. She was sitting curled up with a plain yellow cat on her lap. Her fingers stroked its ears gently.

He couldn't have told why it gave him such pleasure to see her. But there was a sudden sense of loss, too, as he remembered her final words. "I hadn't hoped to see you again so soon," he said. "Do you mind if I join you and—?"

"Toby," she said. "This is Toby; they let me bring him along. I'm not supposed to be down here, but he got away when I took him from the baggage room, and I chased him in here.

"I guess we don't have very long before take-off, do we?"

"I didn't understand what you said at the gate," John said. "What was that about a Control? I've heard the word, but it's always been used like a nasty name."

"Maybe it is. The recruiting-agent who signed me up said different." She mimicked: "'You will be giving the same selfless, devoted service to mankind that is being offered by those even in Alpha Colony.' Anyway, I wouldn't have come except as a Control."

"What does it mean?"

"They explained that when a scientist conducts an experiment he performs his work on one batch of material, and leaves another completely untouched in order to compare the two and see what changes are made by his experiment.

"So, on Planet 7 there are colonies of people who live in completely natural circumstances, self-governed and uncared-for, except as they can find subsistence out of the jungle itself. The products of the experimental colonies are then compared with us unfettered Controls to see what the benefits are."

"I shouldn't think it would be necessary to set up special Control-colonies on Planet 7; Earth itself should be sufficient.

"There are too many random factors—social and economic—all of which are too hard to evaluate. At least, that's the way they explained it to me."

"But how can you get away from these things out in the Alpha system? The technology is there; people retain their memories and the same social and economic problems exist."

"On a slightly different level," she said. "When you're turned loose in a jungle, and have to scratch with your bare hands for existence most of the extraneous factors are gradually dropped. That's the word they used, extraneous."

John sat back, horrified. "You mean that's the kind of existence you're going to for the rest of your life? A primitive jungle-life, with no civilization whatever? It would kill you or make a savage out of you."

"That's a thing the scientists want to find out," said the girl. "They say that's the way humanity started out, and we have almost completed a full circle. They want to learn at what point humanity should have turned aside in order to have kept climbing."

"That's horrible—deliberately turning you into savages in order to test a theory."

"Well, don't feel so sorry for me. Exactly what do you think they are going to do to you?"

"I don't know," he said in sudden weariness. "I think that I would rather never have heard of Human Developments Project."

"Then you'd better get off the ship in a hurry," she said lightly, "because

there's the take-off warning. We've got to get to our cabins and on the take-off couch before the next bell. Come on, Toby!"



HE WAS SICK during the take-off. When they were finally in space he sat up, his head balloon-like and his stomach spinning. He saw Doris leaning calmly by the port, watching the dwindling Earth. For a moment he hated her cool competence and self containment. He *would* have to be the one to get sick.

"Feeling better, Johnny?" She came over, smiling with the sympathy of a superior creature. "It hit you pretty rough. The steward said they don't usually go out like that."

"I'm all right."

For the rest of the day he stayed in the stateroom. He watched the fading disk of Earth; the overdrive wouldn't be keyed in for another day. Even though it gave him a sickening vertigo, he could not resist the hypnotic last look at his home land.

He wanted to forego dinner entirely that evening, but when Doris offered to have the steward bring it to his room, he refused the suggestion. "I can make it to the diningroom," he said.

He didn't tell her the one reason he wanted to go; he could scarcely admit to himself that it was only to meet again the girl who wore the flame-red dress and owned a yellow cat. He told himself he wanted to see his fellow passengers, to meet the others who were foolhardy enough to give up all they possessed on Earth for this Human Developments experiment.

He walked slowly through the diningroom, Doris' hand upon his arm. He scanned the surrounding tables for the one familiar face, but he failed to see her anywhere.

Then he thought he understood. It was a small diningroom, and certainly not all those who had boarded the ship were here. Each colony-group undoubtedly had its own section and facilities; he asked the waiter about it.

The man nodded. "This is Alpha Colony," he said. "Beta, Gamma and Delta recruits are on the other decks. Is there someone you wish to find?"

He hesitated. "I have a friend—a Control."

"I'm sorry, sir," said the waiter; "surely they must have told you. There's no communication permitted between Control-colonists and any of the experimental groups—for purposes of the experiment, you understand. You may check with your indoctrination supervisor, sir, if there is any misunderstanding about this."

There is no misunderstanding, John thought dully. It was just another of the things that were happening to him. And this, he didn't want. It seemed suddenly of vital importance that he see again the girl in the flame-red dress. He did not even know her name. He could not speak of her or ask about her by name, he thought.

"Don't you feel like eating?" said Doris.

"I guess my stomach can't take this yet."

SHIPBOARD indoctrination-courses were held for each separate group, to acquaint them further with the work of their colony. A Dr. Martin Bronson was supervisor of the Alpha Colony group. John met him the following day, when he came to the stateroom to introduce himself.

He found he was unable to carry out his prepared determination to dislike Bronson. He estimated the man to be about thirty-five, and there seemed a wistful air about him—as if he wished he knew all the answers he was supposed to know.

"I'm acquainted with your music,"

he said; "I have all your records on Planet 7. It was pleasant to learn that you and your sister were joining us. I look forward to much more of your music."

John indicated a chair by the port. "Is that what we are being brought there for? To be court musicians, as it were?"

Instantly he regretted the bad temper of his remark. A shadow crossed the face of Bronson. "You really don't like music?" he said.

"I'm afraid I really don't like Alpha Colony, if you want me to be honest. It's because of my sister that I came, but I had no goal of my own: I'll try not to be uncooperative in whatever you require."

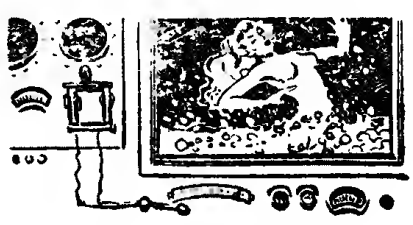
"There is very little that we require of you," said Bronson. "Almost all we ask is the opportunity to watch you live—in the social and physical environment we provide.

"We have a section in Alpha Colony devoted to the study of esthetics; we want you and your sister in that group. It has always been known that esthetic values contributed much to the rise of mankind, but they have never been adequately evaluated.

"You will live in a small communal group where esthetic occupations only are present; all economic needs are provided for you. Within this group, you may live in complete freedom; but you will be observed and your life charted minutely."

"What are the breeding-aspects of the program?" John asked tonelessly.

"Ugly rumors *do* get around, don't they?" said Bronson. "But I'm sure you were told briefly that marriage between members of the group is freely permitted, but not forced. The only restriction is that it *must* be within the group, because potential partners are those who have the same qualities which we desire to emphasize and study in future generations."



"How large is this section of Alpha Colony?"

"There are almost a thousand members in the esthetic section."

"What are the Control-groups?" said John suddenly. "I've heard a little about them, just a little."

Bronson watched his face in silence for a long time. "Yes," he said at last, "your diningroom waiter told me you were inquiring.

"Don't try to see her," he said abruptly. "Don't try to see her again!"

John felt the blood heavy in his face. "You are jumping to conclusions," he said.

"I hope so," said Bronson, "but there is one thing that you must not forget; I'm sure this was adequately explained. Once a person embarks upon this journey, there is no turning back; none whatever. Your signature upon a contract with Human Developments automatically cancels any previous obligations; and all future contracts will be made within the framework of Human Developments. Our restrictions are the minimum required for success of the experiments, but these bounds cannot be overstepped. Do you understand that, John?"

"Yes—yes, I understand that," John said.

THE TIME spent in overdrive was brief, but once out, within the Alpha system, there were days of rocket-travel, before they would reach Planet 7, the only Earth-type world in this family of planets. Man could reach the stars, now, but the impetus to make much use of this ability had nearly died; the discovery had come late, nearly too late...

It was on the ninth day of the journey that John saw the cat—the yellow cat belonging to the girl in the flame-red dress. John saw the animal stroll-

ing ahead of him in the corridor leading to his room. He looked around quickly, but no one else was near. Then he called gently. As if in recognition, the cat turned, arched his back, and rubbed against the steel wall. John scooped him under one arm and hurried to the stateroom.

It was stupid, but his hands were shaking, he discovered, as he set the cat down. Momentarily he debated opening the door and pushing Toby into the corridor; but he knew he was not going to do that.

He entered Doris' stateroom, knowing she was out, because he had just left her with Dr. Bronson on the promenade deck. Searching through drawers he found a piece of wide ribbon. Then he returned to his own room and sat down at the desk, and there he stopped.

What was there to say? And why should he believe she would be interested in hearing any word at all from him? He didn't know.

He wrote hastily on a small scrap of paper: *I don't even know your name. Mine is John Carwell. Can I see you again?— In the corridor between the main lounge and your deck, a door marked "Crew Only" leads to the engineers' catwalk. I'll be there after dinner tonight.*

His hands were shaking even more as he folded the paper in a small roll and doubled the ribbon over it. He tied a narrow band about the cat's neck. Then, cautiously, he opened the door and shoved the cat into the empty corridor. "Find her, Toby," he said. "Go quickly."

●

The long, hollow tube at the center of the ship carried the ten thousand wires and pipes that formed the ship's mechanical nervous-system. It contained an elevator for the use of crewmen, and in each deck there was a small platform for inspection-purposes. A connecting ladder passed between the platforms from one end of the ship to the other.

It was cold in the catwalk tube, and dark. There was a sulphur smell and the faint sting of ozone in the air. John could hear the whine and click of occasional auxiliary motors, and the deep bass note of the ship's engines.

He waited there in the dim light, knowing himself to be a complete fool. Nine chances out of ten the cat hadn't even reached the girl's stateroom with the message about its neck. He had been clawing experimentally when John last saw him; and the tenth chance was that she would laugh and ignore his message completely.

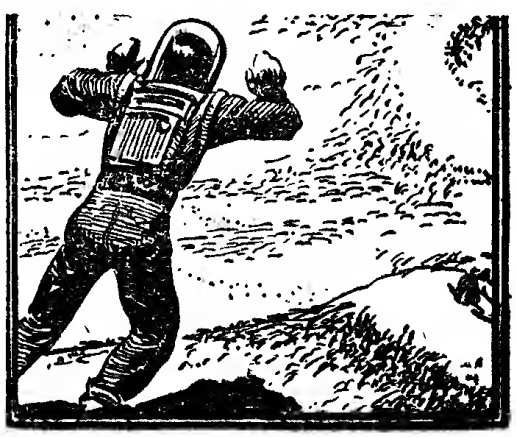
But he was there. He had been there for twenty minutes and he did not know how much longer he would wait. Perhaps until they got to Venus, he thought irrationally.

AN OBLONG club of light beat against the dark with momentary suddenness. John heard the thud of the thick insulated door. He flattened against the wall.

Then his breath caught sharply as he recognized her dim profile and the tilt of her head. She called softly, "John."

"Over here," he said.

For a moment they stood facing each other, unable to explain why they had come.



"I wanted to see you again," he said simply, at last.

"I was hoping you would," she said.

And then there seemed nothing more at all to say. In a few more days the ship would land on Venus, and she would go to a savage jungle dwelling, while he would spend the rest of his life in some musical fairyland. It seemed suddenly beyond all reason.

"What is your name?" he said.

"Lora. Lora Wallace."

"Why did you come? Why are you going to Planet 7?"

"To get away from the dead. Earth's nothing but a big tomb. We kid ourselves that we are rebuilding there, but we're not. The Human Developments people know we're not, but not many others do.

"But don't think I have any sympathy for Human Developments; the whole Project is on the wrong track. I came to get away.

"Back home it's the same old thing that has happened a hundred times before. You can't move from one city to another without a thousand signatures on your papers; you can't plan a project any more complex than a backyard garden without consulting twenty-five authorities and experts.

"Oh, they're all so very generous and helpful. And we understand that it is necessary to obey regulations in order to conserve and rebuild the world. But we're in prison, just the same.

"It got so I couldn't stand it any longer. Some of my friends joined the Moon colonies; some have gone to Mars. But I didn't have money enough for either. Becoming a Control-colonist with Human Developments Project was the only way I could think of to get out of prison."

"Do you think it will be freedom," said John, "fighting the jungle with your bare hands?"

"Yes," she said with fierce intensity. "Because no one's going to care where I go, or what I do, as long as I don't hurt my neighbor. I'd be willing to bet that, in the long run, the only survivors of Earth's culture will be the descendants of the Control-colonies on Planet 7. The only way you can build men and women capable of conquering a planet is to give them a problem and let them figure it out, with complete freedom of action."

"Isn't that what Earth is doing?" said John. "And in a more civilized way? We have the problem—to make Earth habitable again, to create a stable civilization. Aren't we doing that with a greater cooperation than has ever been attained before?"

"No! That's the same old fallacy that has wrecked a hundred nations. Controls, restrictions, bureaus—these things do not mean cooperation; they mean force. And every application of force is one less freedom for some man.

"I don't need anybody to tell me what my job is to be; I'll find my job. I don't need anybody to tell me where is the best place to live; I'll find it for myself. And so will millions of others, when they get a chance. And when we get through we'll have done a far better job than all the boards and experts ever dreamed of doing. If I can't do it on Earth as a free citizen, I'll do it on Planet 7 as a Control!"

He was a little embarrassed by the vehemence of her talk, but it was like a glimpse into a new world. A world he somehow suspected he had long wanted to see.

"Tell me why *you* came," she said.

"I don't know," he answered. "I haven't any reason at all for being here; I've got to find one. I've got to find some purpose for going to Planet 7."

She shook her head. "You don't find it that way. Purposes are something you live with for months and years. All the years of your life. It's not something that comes overnight or with a moment's dreaming.

"We'd better go back," she said. "Someone might miss us if we stay too long. Let me go first, and you follow in a few minutes."

"Wait." He put a hand on her arm. "Will I see you again?

She hesitated and smiled up at him. "All right. Tomorrow. The same time. Be careful. They mustn't find out."



THE INDOCTRINATION class next day was endless. Bronson seemed to take particular delight in pointing out the irrevocability of their decision—reminding that there would be no turning back from the course that had been set.

When discussion-period came, John was suddenly on his feet. "What about those who find that they are unable to conform?" he demanded. "What about those who refuse to abide by the rules of the Project?"

"No one is wasted," said Bronson. "Rebelliousness is a trait that has been noted through the ages; we have colonies where its value is now being determined. I may say that preliminary investigations show the value of the rebel to society have been vastly overestimated."

"But what do you *do* with them?"

"There are jungle-colonies consisting only of rebels, nonconformists, the individualists who believe they can make their way alone. You may appreciate that the members of this colony do indeed have a rough time of it. Miraculously, however, even they manage to survive; and we shall learn much from their survival."

"It's inhuman," cried John. "You can't sentence men to an existence like that for the rest of their lives, because they find they have made a mistake in coming here."

"Everyone has *volunteered,* said Bronson, "to contribute the remainder of his life and energies to Human Developments. We need the contribution of all kinds. And you must not forget: the rebels get what they want. That is the prime rule of the experiment, to give a man what he wants and find out what he can do with it."

John sat down, his chest burning and a smothering in his throat. He felt the curious glances of the others in the room as if he had questioned the oracle of the ages.

Attention turned away from him. Other discussion became a meaningless buzz while he sat there thinking. It made no difference to him, he had no intention of rebelling; he was just along for the ride. And yet, if this were so, why did his chest burn and the palms of his hands grow hot and moist?

The name of Lora kept ringing through his mind, and he did not know why all his whirling thoughts centered about the name of this girl. It was because she was so sure, he thought, and he was so unsure.

Somewhere she had found exactly the answer she wanted of life. In this she was like Doris. But how different were her answers from those of his sister! And between the two he could find no answer for himself to still the endless whirling questions in his mind.

Lora.

The name was still in his mind, hours later, as he sat in the stateroom watching the slow swing of stars across the port. The door from his sister's room burst open suddenly, and Doris strode in and stood before him.

"Martin knows about it!" she exclaimed. "Why in the world did you pull a fool stunt like that?"

He paled. "Like what?" he said.

"You know what I'm talking about. Sneaking down to the Controls' deck, meeting that girl. I think it's disgusting, John—utterly disgusting and un-

believable. Martin said he wasn't going to do anything about it because he didn't think harm would come of that one visit. But you've got to promise that you won't do such a stupid thing again.

"Who is she? Where did you ever meet her?"

He stood up, his face white and cold. "Doris," he said thinly, "you will please keep your damned nose out of my business!"



HE WAS STILL trembling when he reached the rendezvous on the engineers' catwalk much later. He arrived first and waited a long time thinking that she had decided not to come or had been prevented from coming.

He didn't know how they had found out about his meeting with Lora, and he didn't know if he were being spied upon at this moment. In weariness and spiritual exhaustion he didn't care what they knew, or what they did.

She came at last. It seemed as if her slow, cautious opening of the door consumed an eternity and when she was inside on the platform she remained standing quite still.

"Lora." He reached out and took her hand and kept it between his own. It was cold as if she had been afraid of something for a long time.

"They know about us," she said; "did they tell you?"

He nodded in the dim light. "I thought maybe they had kept you from coming."

"They warned me not to do it again, but they didn't try to prevent me."

"Why *did* you come?"

"I don't know." She shook her head as if in violent protest against something of which he had accused her. "I guess it was just because I promised."

"Why did you promise?"

"I don't know!" Suddenly her hands gripped his arms and she pulled herself against him, her cheek flattened against his shoulder.

"John—John—why did it have to be this way?"

His hands pressed against her back as if to stop the shaking of her body. He stroked the hair beside her forehead. "We'll go back," he said; "we'll make them take us back."

They stood in the silence and the stillness as if trying to press out this moment to eternity. He thought of it: their standing in the cold and sulphurous chamber with the life of the ship about them. And beyond that the eternal night of space through which plunged the slim tube that encased them and held back the cold death outside.

How far they had come to find this moment.

He raised her chin gently with the edge of his hand. "I don't know anything about you," he said. "Tell me. I want to know everything that has ever happened to you, every sunrise you have seen, and every leaf that has fallen near you."

She shook her head and tried to draw away as if the magic had passed. But he held her.

"There isn't time for that," she said. "There's only time to wonder why we couldn't have been born in the same world. You could never understand the harshness of mine—the one I've lived in and the one I'm going to. I would suffocate in yours."

"We'll find a new one, then," he said fiercely. "We'll find one on Earth that will hold us both. I won't let you go."

Sudden light from the corridor burst upon them as the heavy door flung open. They clung together spotlighted for an instant and broke apart as Bron-

son came towards them. Other figures hovered in the doorway.

"You're making it harder for yourself," said Bronson. "I'm sorry you didn't take my advice, John; it will be necessary to confine you to quarters for the remainder of the trip. Please come along now."

He felt Lora's hand stiffen momentarily in his, and then release as she moved away.

"We're going back," John said to Bronson. "I demand that you send us back to Earth on the next returning ship."

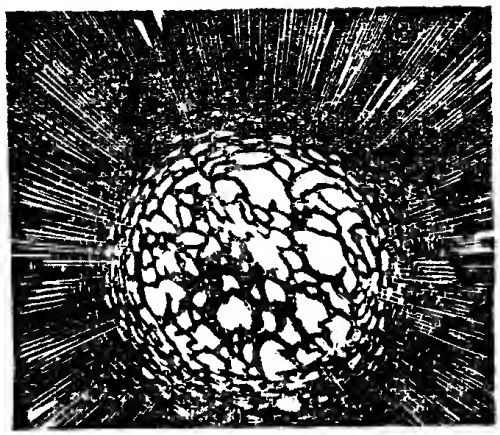
Bronson shook his head. "I guess you didn't understand me. There's no going back; no going back for any of us. In Human Developments you only go forward."

THE CENTRAL continents of Planet 7 are dry desolation where nothing but the foot-long sand monsters exist. But near the poles are belts of verdure almost a thousand miles in width. At the boundary the ugly sand color shades into living green, and impenetrable forest flourishes beside the barren waste.

All the planet's moisture finds its way to the hot rivers and lakes of these polar regions. Here the squalid settlements of native life are found; here Earth men have established their Human Developments Project.

In this fantastic jungle, every conceivable Utopian scheme has been laid out, tried and tested for practicability. Projects planned for a thousand years of time measure the effects of environment and the ability of man to conquer the universe by first conquering himself.

Conceived nearly seventy five years ago by Dr. James Rankin, a government sociologist, the project was first considered a wild impractical scheme to get public money to back fuzzy-headed theories. Rankin proposed the idea shortly after the final settlement of the Great War. Out of the conflict had



come the discovery of the over-drive; the first flush of enthusiasm sent out expeditions to the Alpha system, where Planet 7 was found, and explored, and mapped. But that was when lethargy began to set in; world-weariness sapped human energies, and the reports were shelved, construction of star-ships dwindled off...

Rankin proposed the idea that it would take a new kind of man to survive upon the Earth, but no one knew what kind of man that would be, or if he could be found. Moon-colonies and Mars-colonies had been set up, but something was lacking there...

Rankin's idea took hold, and finally, spontaneous acclaim forced its acceptance upon the government of the world; the leaders seemed to sense that it was the last spurt—there wouldn't be another if this opportunity were permitted to die. Rankin lived long enough to see the first tiny colony established in the forbidding jungles of a far world, encircling an alien star.

Theoretically, it might have been done on some other world in our own solar system, but space-travel made all these worlds seem too close; there was something in the psychological appeal of a planet wheeling around another star—something that proclaimed here was a truly new beginning...

In three quarters of a century, the Project had increased to cover nearly all of the northern polar band with its

various colonies. There was still controversy over the merits of Human Developments. Controversy that was hot and vehement. Demands were made that secrecy be stripped from the Project, and its record and processes be made public. But volunteering as a colonist remained the only way of gaining such information.

It was not a desire to hide its activities from the world, the Project leaders said, but prior knowledge of the activities there had to be kept from contaminating the thinking of those who wished to volunteer as the years passed. Government inspectors were allowed to investigate for evidence of mistreatment or mal-practice; they always gave the Project a clean bill of health, and there had never been a lack of volunteers. Those chosen were the result of careful screening to obtain proper specimens for the various environments and sociologies being tested.

JOHN CARWELL watched the planet slowly fill the port, replacing the star-specked blackness at which he had stared through five long days of imprisonment.

The ship flashed across the barren central zones. He watched the wind-torn wastes and crags, which faded gradually into the green of the polar region.

Then quite abruptly the ship was enveloped in mist, spearing through the perpetual cloud-blanket that rotated slowly about the polar bands. John stared at it, never moving from his position at the port, his hands clasped behind him, and head bowed low. There was mist, and the occasional flash of green that broke through. Rain cascaded down the sides of the vessel, foretelling the greeting that Planet 7 would hand them as they emerged from the ship.

He watched it and hated it. That was the only emotion he could find within him. He hated Planet 7; he hated Human Developments. But most of all, he hated himself. He should be taking some wild and violent action to defend his position and win him Lora.

But he didn't know what such action might be. He couldn't tear at the very walls of the ship, and he couldn't smash his white fist into Bronson's implacable face. It wasn't that kind of a fist; he was trapped and bound.

The door opened behind him. Doris came up quietly. "We're coming in. Have you got everything ready?"

"Everything but me." He nodded toward the jungle now visible through the slanting sheets of rain. "I'll die out there," he whispered.

"That's not where we're going," exclaimed Doris. "You've seen the pictures; you know what Alpha Colony is like. We're not going to that jungle. That's where the Control-colonies are."

She tried to bite the words off even as she said them. John's face became even more bitter.

"They'll send *her* out there. What kind of fanatics are they?"

"Remember: it's what she wants," said Doris kindly. "She volunteered as a Control. There's nothing you can do. Nothing at all."

"I'll find something. I'll *make* something to do!"



THEY NEVER felt the wetness of the storm. A covered gangway reached out from the protection of the terminal, and clamped its warm mouth to the hull of the spaceship. Through it the passengers moved into the dry pleasantness of the terminal building. John did not get a glimpse of Lora; his group was herded quickly away under Bronson's supervision.

At the opposite side of the building they climbed into a bus that sped them across a paved highway splitting the Jungle. Unreality increased for John, as the car nosed through the curtains of rain. It was like going deeper and deeper into a dream—so deep that he might never wake up.

After an hour's ride they slowed. As they made a sharp turn he caught a glimpse of a vast, shining bubble that seemed to shoulder aside the jungle. Its gentle curvature hinted at staggering vastness. Then they halted at another terminal building at the edge of the bubble.

There was no talk from any of his companions. They marched machine-like into the building, as if they had already consigned away all will and initiative. But he sensed that actually they were as stunned as he by the impact of arrival at their *final* destination. It had been adventure and daring when they signed their names to the contract binding them to Planet 7 forever; it had been so far away then. Now—

John and Doris were shown to adjacent apartments once again. He sat down on the luxurious bed and patted it with finality. "So now we're supermen," he said.

The bitterness of his voice cut off any response that Doris might have made. She turned away and walked to the windows, drawing aside the expanse of curtains. She gave a gasp as she looked beyond.

"What is it?" Then John saw beyond the window also. He saw the landscape whose impact was like the sound of some sweet chord struck softly on a great keyboard.

He got up slowly and stood beside Doris. It was ancient Greece; it was an English countryside, the great forests of old Germany.

"It's worth it," said Doris. "It's worth it, John. We'll never have to *fight* this world."

There were no streets, only footpaths crossing the grassy expanse. No mechanical vehicles could be allowed to break that scene. The buildings, the houses—they belonged. The whole scene would have been faulty if any one had been removed.

Statuary as glorious as the Age of Pericles was spotted on the vast lawns. Beside this, Earth's cities as John remembered them were but great slums.

"It's our home," Doris murmured, barely whispering. "We'll never have to leave it; we'll never have to be tired again."

There was some strange mood upon her, which he had never seen before, and which he did not understand. It seemed as if he were watching her shed a burden, which he had never known she carried.

But his own could not be dropped. Somewhere in the jungle beyond the great transparent dome that housed Alpha Colony was Lora, unprotected and in savage surroundings.

JOHN WAS called early next morning for the expected interview with Dr. Warnock, director of Alpha Colony. He was faintly shocked by the initial appearance of the director; Warnock looked like anything but the head of such a group.

He was immense and his eyes were almost hidden in the great roundness of his face. A dead cigar projected from between his fingers. The office was business-like, far removed from the glory that was visible from the apartment windows.

"Sit down, John," Dr. Warnock said.

A second surprise lay in his voice, which was soft and kindly, and John found himself hastily changing his first estimates.

"Have you ever done anything useful in your life?" said Warnock suddenly.

John hesitated, flushing. "I—I don't know—"

"That's good enough. I don't know if I have, either. Some people have the most fantastic views of their own accomplishments. I wondered about you.

"We were all pleased to learn you were coming. Papa Sosnic especially. He wants to hear you; he'll be around this afternoon."

"Papa Sosnic?"

"The dean of the group; claims to be the first member. He's almost ninety years old. He's looking for the Great Musician and the Great Music before he dies. He claims the colonies are sterile and have never produced any. But you'll hear all of that from his own lips. Tell me about your music."

John shrugged. "It has been a living."

"Is that all? Don't you like your music?"



He smiled wanly and told Warnock about his childhood with Doris, who had a dream for them both. He told how she had beat him into submission and forced him to endless practice when he was little.

"And so you hate your music," said Warnock.

"No." John shook his head. "That's the strange part of it. I should, but I don't."

"Why?"

"That's hard to say. I've never tried to tell anyone, especially Doris; she would never understand why I go on playing."

"Can you tell me?" said Warnock.

John found himself doing that, without understanding why. Warnock seemed to him as vast in comprehension as in physical body, and John's feelings spilled.

"The writers, the poets, and the artists have all been men," he said. "The great ones, that is. A woman can't be a great artist. But I could never tell Doris that. It's a man's way of crying and laughing, and saying that the world is a good and happy place; that's why he makes music and writes books and paints pictures.

"A woman doesn't have to do that; she can't. She has a thousand other ways. But a man is supposed to be a mute dumb animal who never thinks of these things. Some of us stumble onto the acceptable way of saying what we have inside."

"Your sister," said Warnock, "why do you suppose she plays?"

John shook his head and smiled. "She doesn't understand music. She plays through her head—not her heart."

"She takes the lead in all your work. Why do you let her do that?"

"I don't know. She wouldn't understand if I tried to tell her how *I* want to play; I guess I'm afraid that no one else would understand either."

"I think Papa Sosnic will understand," said Warnock. He arose suddenly and extended a hand. "He will be around to see you. And your housing-assignments are being made. We will let you know."

JOHN FELT guilty as he walked back to the apartment. He had said things that should not have been said; he had no right to speak of Doris as he had. But his regret faded before the recurring thought of Lora.

He had almost burst out his problem to Warnock, so strongly had the director invited confidence. But he

felt relief now that he had not. Warnock had received Bronson's report of the incident, of course; but if he chose to ignore it, John could do no better.

But it left him no one at all to speak with about Lora, and in this there was panic and loneliness. From the apartment window he contrasted the Elysian peace of the landscape with the hateful jungle beyond the dome. He had to get Lora out of there, and he had no idea how it might be done.

Doris was out. Papa Sosnic came in the afternoon. He knocked once, birdlike, and entered without waiting for John to open the door.

White-haired and white-bearded, he was a wispy little man as old as an elf. The skin of his hands was like webbing. There was a squeakiness in his voice, but it still held a patriarchal authority.

He introduced himself. "I want to hear you play. I want to know if you are a musician, or just another babbler."

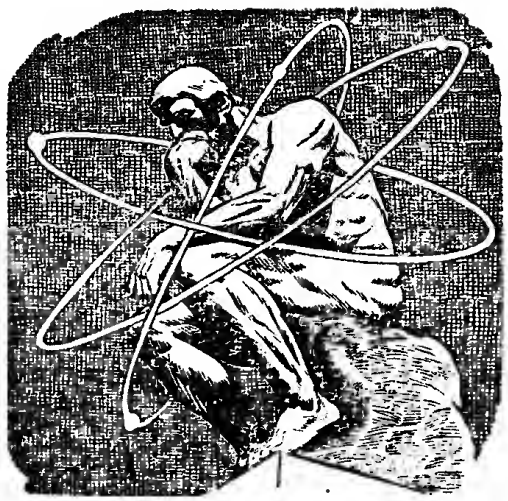
John smiled in friendly regard for the bustling little old man. "You've heard my records," he said. "You know how I play."

"But I know nothing," said Sosnic. "How much of a man's soul can be put on plastic? And besides, all I've heard has been with your sister taking the lead. A wee, timid little boy walking in the shadows where the sun won't scorch and the rain won't wet. Sit down and let me hear you play."

All at once John found himself trembling, ever so slightly, as if a great secret had been found out and he had no place in which to hide.

Then he sat at the keyboard and his fear was gone. He felt in the presence of a friend with whom he could talk as he had never talked before. He began playing softly, a Beethoven Sonata. But after a dozen measures Papa Sosnic threw up his hands.

He almost screeched. "Play! Doris



is not here now. *Play* the music."

John began again. He held nothing back; he did not play as if Doris were there with her cold, intellectual timing, criticizing his every stroke. He altered the timing, and modulated his touch so that the music no longer drew a diagram with mathematical precision.

It painted a picture now, and told a story. And somehow it became the story of Lora. He sketched the fine sweet lines of her profile as he had seen her in the dim light of the engineer's catwalk.

He told Papa Sosnic all about it with his music. He told him what it meant to be lonely and what it meant to find an end to loneliness, if only for a moment.

When he was through, there were tears in the old man's eyes. He sat down and clapped John on the shoulders and kissed him on the cheek.

"You can play, John," he exclaimed. "You can *play*."

They sat at the piano until it grew dark outside. And then, because he could keep it within him no longer, John told Papa Sosnic the real story of Lora, how they had met aboard the ship and separated again without hope of ever seeing each other again.

The old man groaned. "You mean you let her go?" he said. "That you have done absolutely nothing?"

"What could I do? I haven't given up. I'll find a way to make them send us back to Earth. But that seems so far away now and so completely hopeless."

"Why did you let her get away? You could have gone with her. Didn't you know that? You could have changed your membership from experimental to Control-colony. That's always the privilege of any who get tired of conditions here; didn't they tell you?"

John nodded through a numbing haze. "I guess they did," he said slowly. "I guess it was somewhere in the contract. But you can't mean that we should have given up and both lived in primitive savagery the rest of our lives! That's ridiculous!"

"Ah," said Papa Sosnic, "is love ridiculous? And is there anything else that matters? Even your music—that would not matter because it would be with you always in your heart."

"No," whispered John. "It wouldn't work; it would never work. It would destroy us both."

"So far to go," murmured Papa Sosnic sadly. "You have so far to go, Johnny, before you get out of the shadow. Play for me again, Johnny; let me hear you play again."



JOHN AND Doris selected living-quarters near Papa Sosnic's apartment, from the possible assignments offered them. Doris liked the old musician immediately, and John was pleased. Somehow it seemed very important that she should like him.

John's quarters were a green-and-gold luxury, in which he was served with robotic precision. Gadgetry in profusion that he had never imagined served his every need. Meal panels served his every taste whim. Silently, and during his absence the place was kept in order and his clothing refreshed. He never saw a single human servant.

It was something of a novelty at first, but it became breathtaking after a few days to realize that this was his for the rest of his life. It was like going to the carnival every day.

He tried to work; he tried to think; he tried to fight his own emotions and plan their solution. And he tried to smother any consideration of the terrible answer that Papa Sosnic had proposed.

To accept that proposal would be to abandon hope forever. The Colonies existed for the fine, high purpose of developing a Man who could survive his own ingenuity. John liked to think that he was beginning to sense that purpose. But the Controls were no more than mere animal standards, by which to measure the progress of Man.

They were necessary to the experiment, perhaps, but there was no escaping the fact that no single Control could think of himself as anything but a blind and obedient sacrifice—his life an utter waste with respect to creation and fulfillment.

He would accuse himself every day of his life, John thought, if he gave up in order to live with Lora in the jungle, only to watch her dwindle and fade, to watch that light in her eyes die away.

Through the years of incessant struggle against the wet and the mold and the night-terrors their love would diminish; it would be replaced by indifference and then by hate. He would rather never see her again than experience that.

He had time now for composition, which had been denied him almost completely by the rigorous concert-schedules on Earth. With whirlwind energy he hovered over the keyboard

and writing table, but his mind never forgot the problem of escape. He studied the colony, the administration of it, the schedule of incomings and outgoings. And at last he knew what he could do.

His first composition left him exhausted emotionally and physically. In it he said some of the things he had yearned all his life to say, and now he didn't know whether he had said them or merely made a fool of himself.

He invited Papa Sosnic over to hear the work when it was finished. The old man was delighted. "I hadn't supposed you would finish anything so quickly," he said. "Perhaps it will do for the Fall concert. Let me hear the piece, Johnny."

It was dusk again, but he scarcely needed to see the keyboard. His hands moved as if with them he was saying what he had wanted to say all his life.

He started with somber tones of bewilderment and loss. Then the music grew wild with fear and shot through with terror. Suddenly, in the midst of it he felt a thrust of panic. He knew it was bad; he stopped, his hands collapsed on his thighs.

Out of the darkness the voice of Papa Sosnic came softly. "Go on, Johnny—"

AFTER A moment he raised his hands wearily and picked up the music where he had stopped. He went on with a tale of awesome creation. He told of being alive and aware of space and time and planets and suns and of cold and of darkness. He told what it was like to be lonely and what it was like to be glad.

When he finished, he heard no sound at all from the other side of the room. Then there was an abrupt rustling beside him and the figure of Papa Sosnic was sitting beside him on the piano seat.

"It will do, Johnny," he whispered. "I think it will go very well at our concert. I will schedule it, if I may."

John shook his head. "I don't think so. It's pretty bad, isn't it?"

"It's what's in your heart, Johnny; and the heart of a man is never bad."

John got up suddenly and stood at the window, watching the mock twilight, with his back to Papa Sosnic. "Good or bad, I can't do any more like that. It has kept me from going crazy the last month, but I won't be here for the Fall concert."

"Where will you be? Are you going to Lora?"

"Can I trust you? Will you help me?"

"Of course. If it is to see Lora, there is nothing in the world too much to ask. Music is a trifle; Human Developments Project is a puff in the wind compared with the affairs of a man in love. What is it you plan, Johnny?"

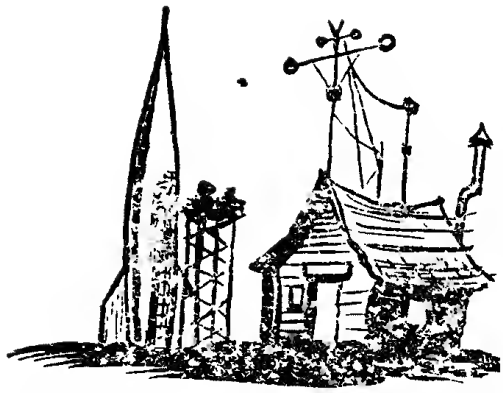
"I'm going back to Earth. I've got it figured out how to get back on the ship next time it's in dock. I know it well enough so that I can stow away during the trip. They'll never find me until it's too late to turn back anyway.

"I've watched the schedule of busses to the terminal. I can get through the gates during the night opening, and I ought to be able to make it on foot to the space port in a day at most. But there is one thing I'll need and that is your help in making an alibi for the following days here, until the ship is well on its way."

Papa Sosnic nodded. "Of course; I could say that you had gone into the forest to live alone in one of the huts to do some work. That is c o m m o n, and would not be noticed—if I could keep Doris from guessing. You will not tell her?"

"No. I'll count on you to keep her from knowing. She seems so busy, anyway, that I don't think she'll notice."

"And what will you do when you are on Earth?" said Papa Sosnic. "How will that put you closer to Lora?"



"I'll tell them what Human Developments Project is like. I'll tell them of the imprisonment and slavery of those who do not bow to the whims of the Project's managers. I'll tell the whole world a story it cannot ignore."

"Slavery?" Papa Sosnic turned his hands upward in a gesture of inquiry. "I see no slavery here. Earth was never so good as this."

"It's slavery when you can't do as you wish—but there's no use arguing that term. I'll tell them what I know!"

"Yes," sighed Papa Sosnic. "You'll tell them; you'll spend months and years hammering on official doors with wild accusations that will never get you a hearing. Your life and energy will dwindle away. You will be upon Earth, and Lora will be here. Perhaps when you are both dried husks, with youth and beauty gone, they will let you see each other again. Perhaps."

John slumped before the shattering logic of the old man. "And so you would have me become a savage, too, and have Lora and I regard each other daily with increasing bitterness while we fight the jungle merely to stay alive."

"There is one other answer," said Papa Sosonic, slowly. "I have not suggested it because it is such a slim hope. But I would have you try it before taking this wild, stowaway flight to Earth."

"What is it?" demanded John.

"Was Lora tested for the various Colony qualifications?"

"I don't know. She said she volunteered as a Control."

"Then it might just be possible that she could pass the tests for Alpha Colony. If she could, it would be permissible for her to re-apply and she would probably be admitted—*if* she could pass."

"She would never do it. For some crazy reason, she hates the thought of the experimental Colonies. The only answer for us is something in between. And the only place to find it is on Earth."

"She has been in the jungle for a month now. Perhaps she has changed her mind; perhaps it is not so romantic as she thought."

John turned sharply, decision in his voice. "What can I do?"

"She could be brought here for a period of visiting, and she could be given the examination. It's worth trying."

"Yes—yes, it's worth trying."

JOHN APPROACHED Dr. Warnock early the next morning. He laid before the director the entire story, holding back only his own desperate plan to return to Earth—which he still intended to keep as a final resort.

When he was through, Warnock glanced up and smiled crookedly. "And Papa Sosnic told you this would be possible, this bringing Lora here to visit and inspect Alpha Colony to see if she liked it well enough to stay?"

"Provided she could pass the tests. And I'm sure she can do that!"

"I sometimes wonder who runs this colony—me or Papa Sosnic," said Warnock.

John felt a cold shock traveling slowly upwards from his feet. He realized then that what Papa Sosnic had said could be done was true only in the old man's own opinion.

"It has never been done before," said Warnock, confirming John's sudden fear. "To do so now would come close to shattering the whole plan of the Colony. You don't understand,

and neither does Papa Sosnic, that it *must* be kept in isolation."

"Imprisonment," whispered John, "that's the word you mean."

Warnock smiled a little sadly. "It is quite difficult to put over, to you who come here, the basic reasoning behind our experiments. The moment a man becomes a member of our Colonies it is almost impossible to keep him from adopting a sort of persecution-complex; he develops a prisoner's psychology."

"Perhaps that is more than a trivial comment on the methods of your experiments."

"We have rules, yes—but we also realize we are dealing with human beings. I suppose you think I am going to turn down your request. Well, you are wrong. I am going to let Lora come here—if she will, of course; the decision must be hers.

"I am aware of your potentiality as a productive member of the Colony. We already have a dossier on you an inch thick. We want to know what a man like you can do for the future of mankind when given the freedom to develop all that is in him."

"Freedom!"

Warnock nodded slowly. "You haven't understood, John. There is freedom here on Planet 7; all you have to do is reach out and take it."

"But you said the kind of thing I have asked has never been done before."

"It has never been requested."

John suddenly relaxed and slumped in the chair and laughed uncontrollably, in spite of the conviction that he felt more like crying. "What is the matter?" Warnock demanded.

John told him then about the wild plan to stow away aboard the starship and return to Earth to conduct a campaign against the Project.

"You couldn't have gone without our knowing," said Warnock, "but we wouldn't have stopped you. You would never have seen Lora again."

"Did Papa Sosnic know this?"

"Papa knows a great many things which we wonder about. Yes, I think he probably understood this very well. He knew how it would be; Papa Sosnic has done you a great service."



IT WAS three days before he received word that Lora was coming. When the news came it seemed as if it were about someone he had known long ago in childhood, someone who would be changed by the long years between, and whom he would scarcely know. He wondered what they would say to each other when they met.

Lora's Control-Colony was through the jungle in the opposite direction from the spaceport; it was at the port that it was arranged for him to meet her.

They saw each other across the storm-darkened terminal lobby where the rain smell made it hard to get a full breath of air. He didn't run toward her as he had thought he would. She *was* like some long ago acquaintance of childhood, and he wanted time to absorb the fact of her presence.

He had never seen her as she was dressed now. Her clothing was rough, a green tinged leather that confirmed her as part of the jungle itself. Her face was changed, too; it was thinner and had taken on a brownness.

But her eyes were the same. He felt a warmth of gladness rising within him as he came close enough to see that light in her eyes. It was more alive than ever before, he thought.

Then she was near him, touching him, her hand upon his arm. And he still had not found the thing to say.

Her eyes glistened now. "I shouldn't have come," she said. "But I had to; I had to take this chance I thought

would never come. The chance to see you once again."

"I told you I'd never let you go," he said.

Deep inside him he had really believed this moment would never come, he thought. He had long ago lost the capacity for believing in miracles.

He put his arms about the miracle of Lora and held her close, but it was like enfolding an impatient bird.

"I shouldn't have come at all," she said. "It was a trick, but I knew it was the only chance I'd ever have to see you."

"What are you talking about?" He drew her close again. "You're here now, and this is forever."

"I'm not staying, John; I let them believe I'd take the tests but I won't. I don't even want to know that I might be eligible for Alpha Colony."

His muscles turned rigid, as if time had stopped, and he was cold and hollow inside. He pressed her closer and touched his lips to her ear. "Hush," he whispered. "Tomorrow we can talk."

BUT THEY didn't mention it again, neither on the morrow or the next day. Lora stayed with Doris, and John wasn't sure at all how that would be. He still burned with the too-recent memory of her calling his meeting with Lora disgusting and stupid.

But Doris had changed in the past few weeks, he thought, without his being aware of it. Perhaps it was Bronson. The scientist came often to see them—or Doris—and John supposed this was highly irregular, since it was no doubt a contaminating factor in the eyes of the Project directors.

The change in Doris was evident when John brought Lora to her. The two exchanged glances, as if they had some lone secret that united them against the world. John tried to understand the sad, friendly smiles they offered each other.

Papa Sosnic beamed and kissed her on both cheeks when John brought Lora to see him. She had traded temporarily the crude clothing of the Control-Colony for the exquisite fabrics furnished the Alpha group. Lean and bronze against the white material of her dress, she was quite the loveliest woman in the whole Colony, John knew —and Papa said so.

She loved everything about the house. When they were alone again, she sank down in the soft luxury of a big chair. Through the window she could see the broad, peaceful landscape and the Grecian splendor of the statuary and the men and women playing beside it.

With spread fingers, she held out the skirt of the dress. "I dreamed of something like this when I was a little girl," she said. "And I never did get it."

"You've got it now," said John, "for always."

She glanced through the windows and beyond to the dome that held back the sun and the wind and the stars. She shook her head slowly. "No— I never did like living behind bars; here they are even in the sky!"

He took her about the Colony on the following days, but he had the sick feeling within him that he was losing. He had the feeling of trying to protect a house of sand with his arms, while the waves washed it away despite all he could do.

Lora was delighted with the fantastic gadgetry that served them in the houses, that conveyed their meals from the central, automatic kitchens serving the whole Colony. She was enraptured with the peace of the forest glens through which he led her by the hand. And she stood before the classic statuary groups by the hour while he explained the stories they told.

But she was like a child excited by a visit to a strange and fabulous house. All her delight did not mean that she had accepted it as her own; and this he could not make her believe—that it was her house as well as his own.

Warnock would not give them many more days, he knew; soon they would

ask her to take the examinations given to all Colonists of the experimental groups.

In the meantime, there was the concert festival for which Papa Sosnic had arranged the presentation of John's composition. He had no heart for it, but John agreed to play it in spite of its badness because Papa Sosnic wanted it.

Time and Alpha Colony grew increasingly unreal. He tried to see things from Lora's viewpoint. He stared at the sky through the protecting dome and wondered why Lora had to see in it prison bars.

Was it any more so than the walls of a house? he asked himself. Why was it so wrong to accept protection and peace and luxury that gave time to devote to his music? On Earth, he and Doris had been musicians, but they had worked hard at it—as hard as if they were bricklayers—and he'd had no time for composition.

He tried to explain this to Lora the day of the concert, but she merely laughed. "It would be better if you were a bricklayer by day and a musician by night," she said.

She seemed to live by a whole set of rules and standards of which he was not even aware. And she refused him the secret of the mystery of her reasoning.

He was going to lose her, he thought, and there was nothing he could do. In a day or two, they would ask her to take the tests and she would refuse. She would return to the jungle. He could go with her if he wished—and die slowly there in her presence. Why did she prefer jungle death to the life that was possible here? he wondered for the thousandth time.

ON THE evening of the concert she was more beautiful than ever, as if to tantalize him with that which he was about to lose. But the thought baffled him more than ever, for she would lose it, too. In the jungle she would don the green leather jacket and trousers. Never would she look like this again.

The concert was to be held in the central auditorium of the Colony, where all large performances were conducted. John noted distastefully that his name was the very last on the program. A tribute, no doubt, to the neophyte, who could be expected to present something worth only the attention of those who had not already left or yawned themselves to sleep, he thought angrily.

He sat near the front with Lora and Doris, and with Papa Sosnic and Dr. Bronson, whose frequent presence was becoming an increasing source of wonder in the Colony. Until his own number was called, John would sit with the audience.

The program carried a number of names he knew. Names long absent from the roster of artists on Earth, but which had once been great in the halls where John and Doris had played.

The first was one of these, Faber Wagnalls, whose work John had studied intently in the early years. He found himself leaning forward eagerly in spite of his own depression, anxious to hear the new work of this man whom he had not even met since coming to the Colony.

Wagnalls was much older now, and gray, different from the pictures John had seen. He sat at the piano on the spotlighted stage and began playing.

John closed his eyes and listened with all his being. The first notes were strange. It was a new man playing, he thought—not the Wagnalls who had written so long ago upon Earth. John listened to the theme, echoing it in his own mind.

Slowly, it seemed to him as if a cold wind had begun to blow upon his naked body. The music—it was not the great Faber Wagnalls at all. It was a simpering, effeminate tune that pranced and dawdled by turns, and had no loveliness or grace in a single note.

The applause was obviously out of sympathy rather than praise, and John joined in it when Wagnalls was through. But he wondered if it were

really merciful to let the old master make such a fool of himself.

He glanced at Doris who returned his look, her nostrils thin and defiant. She knew, he thought, but she wasn't admitting that there was any bad in Alpha Colony.

Lora caught his eye and grinned maliciously; he wondered exactly why.

THE NEXT performance was a group of string instruments. It was mediocre, not as poor as Wagnalls' performance. John began to wonder when he would hear some of the fine work for which Alpha Colony had been created. Beside what he had heard so far his own would not show so badly, even if it was noisy and brash.

He continued to wonder as the program advanced. He grew sick inside as the parade of inept performers and trivial compositions followed one after the other.

And when his sickness bordered on panic—as if he had suddenly perceived the falsity and trickery of life itself—then he understood.

He understood an infinity of things he had never understood before. He understood himself and Doris, and he understood Lora. He understood why she looked up at the great dome and saw bars in the sky. He understood that the applause for Wagnalls was genuine not in pity.

Dimly, in the midst of panic and understanding, he heard his own name called. He stood up and moved automatically to the platform and sat before the piano.

Then he began to play. And with his playing there came clarity and a new reality. He knew what he had to do.

He tried to tell them with the music. He looked out over the dimly lit faces of the audience. He knew they would not understand, but he told them, anyway. He told them with fury and noise that echoed the anger of betrayal. He told them with a theme of passion and struggle that shocked them.

When he was through there was a moment of silence, and then a scattering of faint applause, followed all too quickly by a scattering of the audience itself. He was left standing almost alone with his few friends as the hall cleared.

Dr. Warnock came up and took his hand. "It was strong meat for our tender people," he said. "I don't know anything about music, but I liked that better than the twiddling little pieces I hear so often around here."

"You know what I have to do," said John.

"Yes?"

"I'm going with Lora; we'll leave for the Control-Colony in the morning."



THEY GATHERED after the concert at Papa Sosnic's. Papa wore an air of secret mirth as they walked towards the house under the dome-filtered starlight. Bronson seemed puzzled and half-angry, while Dr. Warnock was an interested spectator of the wholly unexpected events of a play.

Lora and John felt a deep contentment as if they could suddenly see all the way to the end of their lives, and knew they were on the right pathway.

But Doris walked alone, ignoring Bronson's presence, as if she had been stunned and swept to the edge of grief by John's words.

When they reached Papa Sosnic's, she was the first to speak as she separated him from the rest and forced him against the wall. "You don't mean what you said," she insisted. "You don't mean you are giving up all we have gained for a stubborn girl who is afraid to face life!"

"I love that stubborn girl," he said softly, "and she loves me."

"Then she can have courage enough to live here like a human being—if she has wits enough. John, you can't do a crazy thing like this."

The others had stopped where they stood, held by the anguish of Doris' voice. They did not want to hear, and could not help themselves.

Lora stepped in from the next room, and heard, but Doris did not seem to care. "I've spent my whole life trying to keep you from knowing how ugly the world can be," she said to John. "I didn't want you to know it. When you were a child, you never knew that sometimes the food you ate was stolen, and that I went without because there was not enough for both of us. I showed you how to make yourself great; and we were great artists on Earth. We couldn't have had more—until we found this.

"And now there's nothing more to worry about for all the rest of our lives. We'll be taken care of, and we can work and create to the full extent of all that's good in us.

"But more than that: we're not only helping ourselves, we're helping all mankind. There'll never be another chance again to become the kind of humans that won't destroy themselves. If we don't change we won't get that chance again.

"It's like the intermission time between the act of a great play. And we've got a chance to change the lines, and rewrite the show—to make sure it doesn't end as tragedy.

"You can't throw away your chance to help in that, John. Lora, you can't ask that of him!"

There was so little he could say now, he thought. He was understanding Doris for the first time in his life. For the first time he saw how the world had looked to her, a place of agony and terror from which she must flee and protect him.

He remembered the day when he met Lora by the gate. She had said that some came to Human Develop-



ments because they were running away. He had thought that such a thing could never be said of Doris; yet, it was true. She had run from the struggle of life to the security of Alpha Colony. And he had thought her the strongest of them all.

And now it was Lora who had the strength. She had claimed to be running away, but she was running *to* life, not away from it.

HE TOOK Doris' icy hand in his and led her to the couch beside which the others stood. "You've taken care of me too long, and too well," he said. "Tonight you heard what comes of men and women who are too well taken-care-of. You have heard the kind of creativeness built without need or want."

He looked up at Dr. Warnock. "You know the Colony is a failure, don't you, Doctor?"

Warnock smiled and shrugged. "Papa Sosnic has told me often enough. Myself—I am not a musician, only a sociologist."

"Alpha Colony is a failure," said

John. "The whole project is a failure —all but the Control-Colonies.

"You have thought you could learn about the greatness of men by splitting them up into groups and viewing only a single facet of life. You can't do it; you can't have musicians without truck-drivers and bricklayers. And you can't have a man who is a musician only. All this dividing, and separating, and splitting-up will reveal nothing, no more than would cutting off an arm or a leg show you where greatness lies.

"Greatness can be viewed only in the whole man. This other won't work. Every man needs a touch of cussedness, a pinch of damn foolishness, and all the brain stuff he can cram in his head. Strain out any of it and you have only a piece of a man.

"And above all, you can't make men great by taking care of them. I didn't understand that until I heard the stupid little performances tonight. You have taken great men and made them weaklings. Faber Wagnalls—it's enough to make you want to cry.

"The only real greatness a man ever has is the ability to take care of himself, and twist the world to fit his needs. True, we have almost burned it to a cinder in the process, but that 'almost' is what makes the difference. We haven't failed, and we aren't going to—unless we give up trying to take care of ourselves and create some fatal Utopia. There's no freedom in the Garden of Eden.

"I almost found that out too late; and except for tonight, Lora might never have pounded it into my thick skull."

IN THE light of another day, the Colony seemed a place that John had never seen before at all. They walked slowly toward the terminal building, past the great statuary that was somehow shoddy this morning.

He understood why, and he would have seen it before if he had been a sculptor. The images were but copies —copies made by the faulty memories of men who remembered Earth, but looked forward to nothing.

The lawns and the forest paths were like a child's toy garden, and the narrow confines under the dome seemed to crush in upon him. He looked skyward —and now he could see the bars shutting out the world and the wind and the rain!

Lora hurried him along, as if she could endure no longer the imprisonment of the Colony. At the terminal building they looked out and saw that it was raining again beyond the dome, the eternal jungle rain. John shivered a little as the wind whipped moisture through the doors.

He looked back at Doris and the others. He felt sorry for them, but there was nothing at all that he could do for them. Doris was white-faced, but calm. He took her in his arms and kissed her.

"Bye, Sis," he said.

Then they were out in the rain, moving toward the bus that would take them to the beginning of the jungle trail. Lora was laughing, the raindrops splashing on her face, and running down in trickles.

When the history of Human Developments was finally written, he thought, it would be of the descendants of the Control-Colonists, not those of the poor prisoners of Alpha Colony.

Then he caught sight of his own long, white hands and remembered there would be no music in the jungle. His hands would warp with the labor of building shelters and fighting for food. But no music? He suddenly laughed aloud, remembering the words of Papa Sosnic "—it would be with you always in your heart."

So many things Papa Sosnic knew! John glanced again at Lora's shining, rain-wet face and turned his own to catch the raindrops on his skin.

Their gentle sting assured him that, at last, he was alive.

★

SHE CALLED ME FRANKIE

An S. F. Q. "First"

Any resemblance between activities on Oog, and on more familiar places, is, of course...

(illustrated by Tom Beecham)

by Robert K. Ottum

BULLETIN: Oog, Trans-Planet News Service (Special)—Space officers confirmed here today that one of the mysterious "flying cigars," which has plagued Venus for the past year, has crashed in the Oog desert, and said its pilots were weird 68-inch creatures.

Venus space-force pilots also confirmed they captured the three occupants of the strange craft, but authorities clamped a tight lid of secrecy over further details.

The Space Commission, meanwhile, said it plans to admit newsmen to the scene tomorrow. Watch this newspaper for further details!

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(Editor's note: This exclusive, eye-witness account of the strange mystery ship from another planet is an on-the-spot report from our roving reporter, F. 190, written expressly for Trans-Planet News Service).

●

By F. 190: I'm writing tonight from the sprawling Oog desert, where history is being made.

The "flying cigar" is actually here, half-buried in a sand dune. And its occupants are here, but still shielded by a tight security-control. But I can report exclusively: It is true; they are real, and they are here on Venus.

Today I looked at and touched the ship which brought them through space, and which forever dispells any doubt scientists might have had about the existence of the flying cigars. It seems odd that our nation could have been so near mass-hysteria over such a clumsy, amateurish craft. It is a dull silver in color, made of what appears to be a light metal. Oddly enough, it seems to be powered by some type of old-fashioned thrust-rocket, and not the sun.

Space-officers said tomorrow newsmen will be permitted to see the captives. They held back most details, but one high official (who refused to be quoted) admitted this much is true: The creatures have two eyes each, and their heads seem to be round in shape.

Read this column tomorrow for another exclusive story.

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(Editor's note: This is the second in an exclusive series of articles from the Oog desert, site of the crash-landing of the mystery-ship from space. Here is reporter F. 190 to tell it to you).

●

By F. 190: I have just met—and actually talked with—three creatures from another planet. Two days ago, they crawled from their space-ship, which crashed here on the Oog desert, and were captured by the security space-patrol. Until today they have been hidden by authorities.

We communicated through the thought-transmitter.



"Fortunately, the ship has not been damaged too much."

The three claim to be space-explorers who intend no harm. Their physical appearance makes this believable; their approximate height is 68 inches. They have no antenna on their heads; instead, they have rounded, shell-like objects they call ears with which they receive sounds. They stand quite straight.

One of them has long hair, which falls about its shoulders, and a body shaped quite differently from the other two. The body of this one seems more rounded in form—apparently softer in some spots than in others. It claims to be of another sex entirely, referred to as a "woman" on its native planet.

The woman moves about strangely, in what could best be described as an undulating fashion. It "laughs" frequently, showing a row of bright white objects, known to these creatures as teeth. The three do not like our concentrated food; they claim the teeth are used for grinding up food of a different type than we have here on Venus.

The first press-conference was cut short by the space-chiefs. They said the three probably will go before a special medical examining board soon—perhaps tomorrow. Science Patrol officials already have completed their first examination of the strange space ship, and announced today it will be dismantled soon for a more thorough check.

Read this column for more on-the-spot news.

●

(Editor's note: This, third in a series of special articles from the Oog desert, tells of F. 190's exclusive talk with the three creatures from another planet, who were captured after the crash of their space ship, a "flying cigar.")

●

By F. 190: The space creatures appeared quite upset today when I told them the medical examining-board plans to dismember them tomorrow, for a scientific examination council. The one which is called a woman did something strange—apparently a ritual in its native land—called "crying." During this period, little drops of water

came from its eyes, which are the purest azure blue in color. Later it laughed (which I explained to you in an earlier story) and then it seemed to do both at once. The two creatures with the woman seemed more stoic.

The woman-creature also allowed me to examine her more closely, today. I am amazed. It has white skin, velvety to the touch. The creature is soft and warm-blooded; I quite enjoyed it.

We talked at great length about our system of reference, and the space-people seemed quite amazed we are named by initials and numbers. These creatures refer to one another by what they call "names." These are long combinations of letters.

The woman creature even gave me one of the names.

She called me Frankie.

●

(Editor's note: This is the fourth in a series of articles by F. 190, space-reporter whose on-the-spot coverage of the strange space-people is written exclusively for Trans-Planet News Service).

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By F. 190: The three space-people have only a few hours to live.

Tonight, the Venus Medical Board, top surgeons from around the nation, will dismember the three creatures who landed here in their space-ship.

Their weird, almost-primitive craft, was carefully dismantled today by a board of science review. It will be studied by some of the top brains from around our nation, in an effort to determine how it came through space.

I talked with them again today.

The woman-creature is unusual. Standing close to it, one can smell a substance on its body. This is known as "perfume." The smell is pleasing.

The woman talked with me for a long time today.

This creature certainly has a strange manner of locomotion. Its legs, tubular white stems, seem quite . . . shapely. It showed reporters today one of its native customs, called "kissing." I was the only reporter from the press-tent who volunteered to conduct this experiment—although the woman-creature assured as all it wouldn't hurt.

It didn't hurt.

I will tell you more in another article.

●

Bulletin: Oog, Trans-Planet News Service (Special)— The three space creatures captured four days ago escaped the space-patrol in a daring break tonight, and captured one of our people.

Inter-planet patrol reported they got away in the ship which brought the medical examining-board here, and that they seem to have vanished into space.

They broke out of their cell a few minutes before the medical-board was to have conducted its experiment. Officers found scratched on their cell wall a set of ciphers, and called immediately for geologists to study and translate it.

X. 187, head of the Venus Geology Institute, said late tonight he has deciphered the strange writings, but admitted that neither he nor his associates are able to understand what it means.

The writing, translated, said: "So long, suckers." It was signed: "Frankie."

★

Another "First": WORLD OF ICE by Albert Hembuter is in the current issue of Dynamic Science Fiction

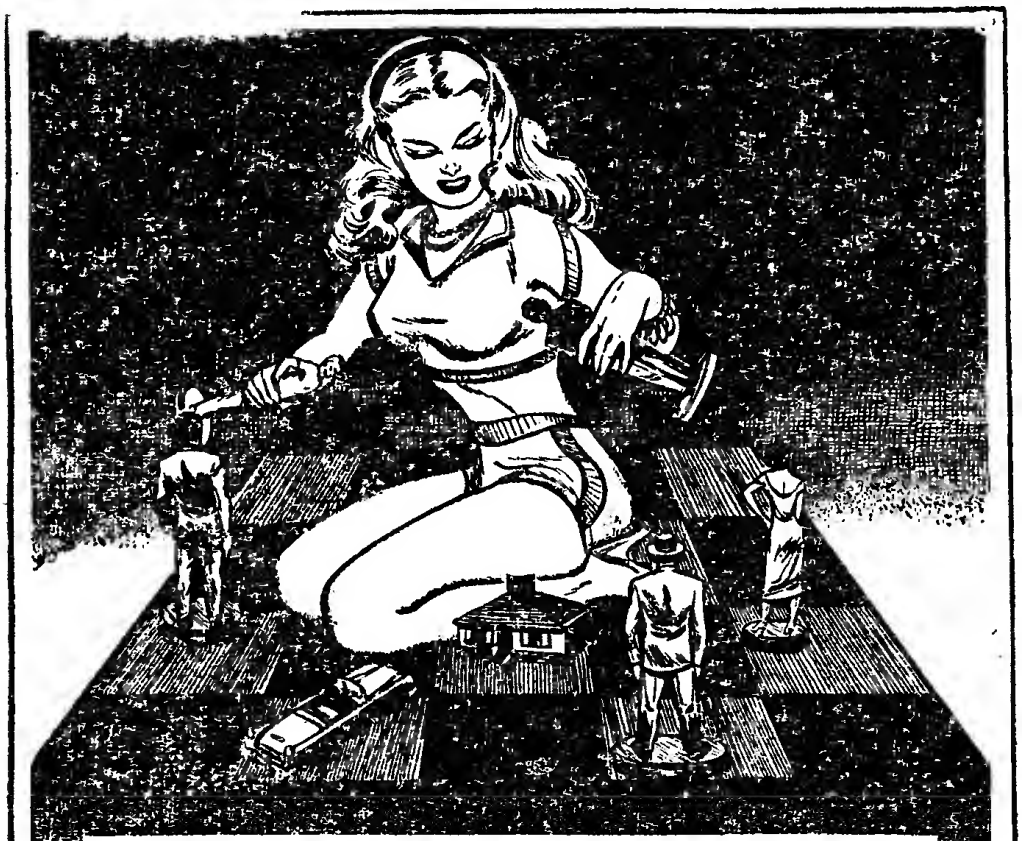
THE WORLD SHE WANTED

Our Feature Story

by Philip K. Dick

(illustrated by Milton Luros)

As a special service to our readers, on this, Science Fiction Quarterly's second anniversary, we offer a simple answer to everything.



HALF-DOZING, Larry Brewster contemplated the litter of cigarette-butts, empty beer-bottles, and twisted match-folders heaped on the table before him. He reached out and adjusted one beer-bottle—thereby achieving just the right effect.

In the back of the *Wind-Up* the small dixieland jazz combo played noisily. The harsh jazz-sound mixed with the murmur of voices, the semi-darkness, the clink of glasses at the bar. Larry Brewster sighed in happy contentment. "This," he stat-

ed, "is Nirvana." He nodded his head slowly, agreeing with the words uttered. "Or at least the seventh level of zen-buddhist heaven."

"There aren't seven levels in the zen-buddhist heaven," a competent female voice corrected, from directly above him.

"That's a fact," Larry admitted, reflecting on the matter. "I was speaking metaphorically, not literally."

"You should be more careful; you should mean exactly what you say."

"And say exactly what you mean?" Larry peered up. "Have I had the pleasure of knowing you, young lady?"

The slender, golden-haired girl dropped into the seat across the table from Larry, her eyes sharp and bright in the half-gloom of the bar. She smiled at him, white teeth sparkling. "No," she said. "We've never met; our time has just now arrived."

"Our—our time?" Larry drew himself up slowly, pulling his lanky frame together. There was something in the girl's bright, competent face that vaguely alarmed him, penetrating his alcoholic haze. Her smile was too calm, too assured. "Just exactly what do you mean?" Larry murmured. "What's this all about?"

The girl slipped out of her coat, revealing full, rounded breasts and supple figure. "I'll have a martini," she said. "And by the way—my name is Allison Holmes."

"Larry Brewster." Larry studied the girl intently. "What did you say you wanted?"

"A martini. Dry." Allison smiled coolly across at him. "And get one for yourself, why don't you?"

Larry grunted under his breath. He signalled to the waiter. "A dry martini, Max."

"Okay, Mr. Brewster."

A few minutes later Max returned and set a martini glass on the table. When he had gone, Larry leaned toward the blonde-haired girl. "Now, Miss Holmes—"

"None for you?"

"None for me." Larry watched her sip her drink. Her hands were small and dainty. She wasn't bad-looking, but he didn't like the self-satisfied calmness in her eyes. "What's this business about our time having come? Let me in on it."

"It's very simple. I saw you sitting here and I knew you were the one. In spite of the messy table." She wrinkled her nose at the litter of bottles and match-folders. "Why don't you have them clear it off?"

"Because I enjoy it. You knew I was the *one?* Which one?" Larry was getting interested. "Go on."

"Larry, this is a very important moment in my life." Allison gazed around her. "Who would think I'd find you in a place like this? But that's the way it's always been for me. This is only one link of a great chain going back—well, as far back as I can remember."

"What chain is that?"

Allison laughed. "Poor Larry. You don't understand." She leaned toward him, her lovely eyes dancing. "You see, Larry, I know something no one else knows—no one else in this world. Something I learned when I was a little girl. Something—"

"Wait a minute. What do you mean by 'this world'? You mean there are nicer worlds than this? Better worlds? Like in Plato? This world is only a—"

"Certainly not!" Allison frowned. "This is the best world, Larry. The best of all possible worlds."

"Oh. Herbert Spencer."

"The best of all possible worlds—for me." She smiled at him, a cold, secret smile.

"Why for you?"

There was something almost predatory in the girl's finely-chiseled face as she answered. "Because," she said calmly, "this is *my* world."

LARRY RAISED an eyebrow. "Your world?" Then he grinned goodna-

turedly. "Sure it is, baby; it belongs to all of us." He waved expansively around at the room. "Your world, my world, the banjo player's world—"

"No." Allison shook her head firmly. "No, Larry. My world; it belongs to me. Everything and everybody. All mine." She moved her chair around until she was close by him. He could smell her perfume, warm and sweet and tantalizing. "Don't you understand? This is mine. All these things—they're here for me; for my happiness."

Larry edged away a little. "Oh? You know, as a philosophical tenent that's a bit hard to maintain. I'll admit Descartes said the world is known to us only through our sense, and our sense reflect our own—"

Allison laid her small hand on his arm. "I don't mean that. You see, Larry, there are *many* worlds. All kinds of worlds. Millions and millions. As many worlds as there are people. Each person has his own world, Larry, his own private world. A world that exists for him, for his happiness." She lowered her gaze modestly. "This happens to be *my* world."

Larry considered. "Very interesting, but what about other people? Me, for example."

"You exist for my happiness, of course; that's what I'm talking about." The pressure of her small hand increased. "As soon as I saw you, I knew you were the one. I've been thinking about this for several days now. It's time *he* came along. The man for me. The man intended for me to marry—so my happiness can be complete."

"Hey!" Larry exclaimed, drawing back.

"What's wrong?"

"What about *me?*" Larry demanded. "That's not fair! Doesn't *my* happiness count?"

"Yes...but not here, not in this world." She gestured vaguely. "You have a world someplace else, a world of your own; in this world you're merely a part of my life. You're not completely real. I'm the only one in this world who's *completely* real. All the rest of you are here for me. You're just—just *partly* real."

"I see." Larry sat back slowly, rubbing his jaw. "Then I sort of exist in a lot of different worlds. A little bit here, a little bit there, according to where I'm needed. Like now, for instance, in this world. I've been wandering around for twenty-five years, just so I could turn up when you needed me."

"That's right." Allison's eyes danced merrily; "you have the idea." Suddenly she glanced at her wristwatch. "It's getting late. We better go."

"Go?"

Allison stood up quickly, picking up her tiny purse and pulling her coat around her. "I want to do so many things with you, Larry! So many places to see! So much to do!" She took hold of his arm. "Come on. Hurry up."

Larry rose slowly. "Say, listen—"

"We're going to have lots of fun." Allison steered him toward the door. "Let's see... What would be nice..."

Larry halted angrily. "The check! I can't just walk out." He fumbled in his pocket. "I owe about—"

"No check; not tonight. This is my special night." Allison spun toward Max, cleaning up the vacated table. "Isn't that right?"

The old waiter looked up slowly. "What's that, Miss?"

"No check tonight."

Max shook his head. "No check tonight, Miss. The boss' birthday; drinks are on the house."

Larry gaped. "What?"

"Come on." Allison tugged at him, pulling him through the heavy plush doors, out onto the cold, dark New York sidewalk. "Come on Larry—we have so much to do!"

LARRY MURMURED, "I still don't know where that cab came from."

The cab drove off, racing away down the street. Larry looked around. Where were they? The dark streets were silent and deserted.

"First," Allison Holmes said, "I want a corsage. Larry, don't you think you should present your fiancee with a corsage? I want to go in looking nice."

"A corsage? At this time of night?" Larry gestured at the dark, silent streets. "Are you kidding?"

Allison pondered, then she crossed the street, abruptly; Larry followed after her. Allison came up to a closed-up flower ship, its sign off, door locked. She rapped with a coin on the plate glass window.

"Have you gone crazy?" Larry cried. "There's nobody in there, this time of night!"

In the back of the flower shop somebody stirred. An old man came slowly toward the window, removing his glasses and putting them in his pocket. He bent down and unlocked the door. "What is it, lady?"

"I want a corsage, the best you have." Allison pushed into the shop, gazing around at the flowers in awe.

"Forget it, buddy," Larry murmured; "don't pay any attention to her. She's—"

"That's all right." The old man sighed. "I was going over my income-tax; I can use a break. There should be some already made up. I'll open the refrigerator."

Five minutess later they were out on the street again, Allison gazing ecstatically down at the great orchid pinned to her coat. "It's beautiful, Larry!" she whispered. She squeezed his arm, gazing up in his face. "Thanks a lot; now, let's go."

"Where? Maybe you found an old guy sweating over his tax returns at one o'clock in the morning, but I defy you to find anything else in this god-forsaken graveyard."

Allison looked around. "Let's see... Over this way. This big old house over here. I wouldn't be a bit surprised—" She tugged Larry down the sidewalk, her high heels clattering in the night silence.

"All right," Larry murmured, grinning a little. "I'll go along with you; this ought to be interesting."

NO LIGHT showed in the great square house; all the shades were down. Allison hurried down the walk, feeling her way through the darkness, up onto the front porch of the house.

"Hey!" Larry exclaimed, suddenly alarmed. Allison had taken hold of the doorknob; she pushed the door open.

A burst of light struck them, light and sound. The murmur of voices. Past a heavy curtain people moved, an immense room of people. Men and women in evening dress, bending over long tables and counters.

"Oh, oh," Larry muttered. "Now you've got us into it; this is no place for us."

Three tough-looking gorillas came strolling over, their hands in their pockets. "Okay, mister; let's go."

Larry started out. "That's fine by me. I'm an easy-going person."

"Nonsense." Allison caught hold of his arm, her eyes glittering with excitement. "I always wanted to visit a glambling-place. Look at all the tables! What are they doing? What's that over there?"

"For Lord's sake," Larry gasped desperately. "Let's get out of here. These people don't know us."

"You bet we don't," one of the three hulking bruisers rasped. He nodded to his companions. "Here we go." They grabbed hold of Larry and propelled him toward the door.

Allison blinked. "What are you doing to him? You stop that!" She concentrated, her lips moving. "Let me—let me talk to *Connie*."

The three bruisers froze. They turned toward her slowly. "To *who*? Who did you say, lady?"

Allison smiled up at them. "To Con-

nie—I think. Isn't that what I said? Connie. Where is he?" She looked around. "Is that him over there?"

A small dapper man at one of the tables turned resentfully at his name, his face twisting with annoyance.

"Let it go, lady," one of the bruisers said quickly. "Don't bother Connie; he don't like to be bothered." He closed the door, pushing Larry and Allison past the curtain, into the big room. "You go and play. Enjoy yourselves; have a good time."

Larry looked down at the girl beside him. He shook his head weakly. "I could sure use a drink—a stiff one."

"All right," Allison said happily, her eyes fastened on the roulette table. "You go have your drink. I'm going to start playing!"

AFTER A couple of good stiff scotch-and-waters, Larry slid off the stool and wandered away from the bar, over toward the roulette table in the center of the room.

A big crowd had collected around the table. Larry closed his eyes, steadying himself; he knew already. After he had gathered his strength he pushed his way through the people and up to the table.

"What does this one mean?" Allison was asking the croupier, holding up a blue chip. In front of her was an immense stack of chips—all colors. Everyone was murmuring and talking and looking at her.

Larry made his way over to her. "How are you getting along? Lost your dowry yet?"

"Not yet. According to this man, I'm ahead."

"He should know," Larry sighed wearily; "he's in the business."

"Do you want to play, too?" Allison asked, accepting an armload of chips. "You can have these. I've got more."

"I see that. But—no, thanks; it's out of my line. Come on." Larry led her away from the table. "I think the time has come for you and me to have a little chat. Over in the corner where it's quiet."

"A chat?"

"I got to thinking about it; this thing has gone far enough."

Allison trailed after him. Larry strode over to the side of the room. In a huge fireplace, a roaring fire blazed. Larry threw himself down in a deep chair, pointing to the chair next to it. "Sit," Larry said.

Allison sat down, crossing her legs and smoothing down her skirt. She leaned back, sighing. "Isn't this nice? The fire and everything? Just what I always imagined." She closed her eyes dreamily.

Larry took his cigarettes out and lit up slowly, deep in thought. "Now look, Miss Holmes—"

"Allison. After all, we're going to be married."

"Allison, then. Look here, Allison, this whole thing is absurd. While I was at the bar I got thinking it over. It isn't right, this crazy theory of yours."

"Why not?" Her voice was sleepy, far-off.

Larry gestured angrily. "I'll tell you why not. You claim I'm only *partly* real. Isn't that right? You're the only one who's completely real."

Allison nodded. "That's right."

"But look! I don't know about all these other people—" Larry waved at them depreciatingly. "Maybe you're right about them. Maybe they *are* only phantoms. But not me! You can't say I'm just a phantom." He banged his fist against the arm of the chair. "See? You call that just partly real?"

"The chair's only partly real, too."

LARRY GROANED. "Damn it, I've been in this world twenty-five years, and I just met you a few hours ago. Am I supposed to believe I'm not really alive? Not really—not really me? That I'm only a sort of—a hunk

of scenery in your world? Part of the fixtures?"

"Larry, darling. You *have* your own world. We each have our own world. But this one happens to be mine, and you're in it for me." Allison opened her large blue eyes. "In your real world I may exist a little for you, too. All our worlds overlap, darling; don't you see? You exist for me in my world. Probably I exist for you in yours." She smiled. "The Great Designer has to be economical—like all good artists. Many of the worlds are similar, almost the same. But each of them belongs to only one person."

"And this one is yours." Larry let his breath out with a sigh. "Okay, baby. You have your mind made up; I'll play along with you—for awhile, at least. I'll string along." He contemplated the girl leaning back in the deep chair next to him. "You know, you're not bad-looking, not bad at all."

"Thank you."

"Yeah, I'll bite. For awhile, at least. Maybe we *are* meant for each other. But you've got to calm down a little; you try your luck too hard. If you're going to be around me, you better take it a little easier."

"What do you mean, Larry?"

"All this. This place. What if the cops c o m e? Gambling. Running around." Larry gazed off into the distance. "No, this isn't right. This isn't the kind of life I've got pictured. You know what I see in my mind's eye?" Larry's face lit up with wistful pleasure. "I see a little house, baby. Out in the country. Way out. The farm country. Flat fields. Maybe Kansas. Colorado. A little cabin. With a well. And cows."

Allison frowned. "Oh?"

"And you know what else? Me, out in the back. Farming. Or—or feeding the chickens. Ever fed chickens?" Larry shook his head happily. "A lot of fun, baby. And squirrels. Ever walk in the park and feed squirrels? Gray squirrels, big long tails? Tails as long as the squirrels."

Allison yawned. Abruptly she got to her feet, picking up her purse. "I think it's time we ran along."

Larry got up slowly. "Yeah, I guess it is."

"Tomorrow is going to be a busy day. I want to get started early." Allison made her way through the people, toward the door. "First of all, I think we should begin looking for—"

Larry stopped her. "Your chips."

"What?"

"Your chips. Turn them in."

"What for?"

"For money—I think they call it now."

"Oh, bother." Allison turned to a heavy-set man sitting at the black-jack table. "Here!" She dumped the chips in the man's lap. "You take them. All right, Larry. Let's go!"

THE CAB pulled up in front of Larry's apartment. "Is this where you live?" Allison asked, gazing up at the building. "It's not very modern, is it?"

"No." Larry pushed the door open. "And the plumbing isn't very good, either. But what the hell."

"Larry?" Allison stopped him as he started to get out.

"Yes?"

"You won't forget about tomorrrow, will you?"

"Tomorrow?"

"We have so much to do. I want you to be up bright and early, ready to go places. So we can get things done."

"How about six o'clock in the evening? Is that early enough?" Larry yawned. It was late, and cold.

"Oh, no. I'll be by for you at ten AM."

"Ten! But my job! I go to work!"

"Not tomorrow. Tomorrow is *our* day."

"How the hell am I going to live if I don't—"

Allison reached up, putting her slender arms around him. "Don't worry; it'll be all right. Remember? This is my world." She pulled him down to her, kissing him on the mouth. Her lips were sweet and cool. She held onto him tightly, her eyes closed.

Larry broke away. "All right, already." He straightened his tie, standing up on the pavement.

"Tomorrow, then. And don't worry about your old job. Goodbye, Larry darling." Allison slammed the door. The cab drove off down the dark street. Larry gazed after it, still dazed. Finally he shrugged and turned toward the apartment house.

Inside, on the table in the hall, was a letter for him. He scooped it up, opening it as he climbed the stairs. The letter was from his office, Bray Insurance Company. The annual vacation-schedule for the staff, listing the two weeks doled out to each employee. He didn't even have to find his name to know when *his* began.

"Don't worry," Allison had said.

Larry grinned ruefully, stuffing the letter in his coat pocket. He unlocked his apartment door. Ten o'clock did she say? Well, at least he would have a good night's sleep.

THE DAY was warm and bright. Larry Brewster sat out on the front steps of the apartment building, smoking and thinking while he waited for Allison.

She was doing all right; no doubt about that. A hell of a lot of things seemed to fall like ripe plums into her lap. No wonder she thought it was her world... She was getting the breaks, all right. But some people were like that. Lucky. Walked into fortune every time; won on quiz shows; found money in the gutter; bet on the right horse. It happened.

Her world? Larry grinned. Apparently Allison really believed it. Interesting. Well, he'd string along with her a little while longer, at least; she was a nice kid.

A horn sounded, and Larry glanced up. A two-tone convertible was parked in front of him, the top down. Allison waved. "Hi! Come on!"

Larry got up and came over. "Where did you get this?" He opened the door and slid in slowly.

"This?" Allison started the car up. It zoomed out into traffic. "I forget; I think someone gave it to me."

"You forget!" He stared at her. Then he relaxed against the soft seat. "Well? What's first on the list?"

"We're going to look at our new house."

"Whose new house?"

"Ours. Yours and mine."

Larry sank down into the seat. "What! But you—"

Allison spun the car around a corner. "You'll love it; it's nice. How big is your apartment?"

"Three rooms."

Allison laughed merrily. "This is eleven rooms. Two stories. Half an acre. Or so they tell me."

"Haven't you seen it?"

"Not yet. My lawyer just called me this morning."

"Your lawyer?"

"It's part of an estate left to me."

Larry pulled himself together slowly. Allison, in a scarlet two-piece outfit, gazed happily at the road ahead, her small face blank and contented. "Let me get all this straight. You've never seen it; your lawyer just called you; you get it as part of an estate."

"That's right. Some old uncle of mine. I forget his name. I didn't expect him to leave me anything." She turned toward Larry, beaming warmly at him. "But this is such a special time for me. It's important that *everything* go right. My whole world..."

"Yeah. Your whole world. Well, I hope you like the house after you see it."

Allison laughed. "I will. After all, it

exists for me; that's what it's there for."

"You've got this worked out like an exact science," Larrry murmured. "Everything that happens to you is for the best. You're pleased with everything. So it *must* be your world. Maybe you're just making the best of things— Telling yourself you really like the things that happen to you."

"Do you think so?"

He frowned in thought as they zipped along. "Tell me," he said finally, "how did you learn about these multiple worlds? Why are you so sure this one is yours?"

She smiled at him. "I worked it out myself," she said. "I studied logic and philosophy, and history—and there was always something that puzzled me. Why were there so many vital changes in the fortunes of people and nations that seemed to come about providentially, just at the right moment? Why did it really seem as if my world had to be just the way it was, so that all through history, strange things happened which made it work out that way.

"I'd heard the 'This is the Best of All Possible Worlds' theory, but it didn't make sense the way I read about it. I studied the religions of mankind, and scientific speculations of the existence of a Creator—but something was lacking, something which either couldn't be accounted for, or was just overlooked."

Larry nodded. "Well, sure. It's easy; if this is the best of all possible worlds, they why is there so much suffering—unnecessary suffering—in it, if there's a benevolent and all-powerful Creator, as so many millions have believed, do believe, and will believe in the future, no doubt, then how do you account for the existence of evil?" He grinned at her. "And you worked out the answer to all that, eh—just tossed it off like a martini?"

Allison sniffed. "You don't have to put it that way.... Well, it *is* simple and I'm not the only one who's figured it out, although obviously I'm the only one in *this* world..."

"Okay," Larry broke in, "I'll hold back objections until you've told me how you did it."

"Thank you, darling," she said. "You see, you *are* understanding—even if you don't agree with me right off the bat. ...Well, that would get tiresome, I'm sure. It's much more fun if I have to work to convince you.... Oh, don't get impatient; I'll come to the point."

"Thank you," he said.

"It's simple, like the egg-trick, once you know the angle. The reason why both the benevolent Creator *and* the 'Best of All Possible Worlds' theory seem to bog down is because we start out with an unjustified assumption—that this is the *only* world. But suppose we try a different approach: assume a Creator of infinite power; surely, such a being would be capable of creating infinite worlds...or at least, so large a number of them to seem infinite to us.

"If you assume *that,* then everything else makes sense. The Creator set forces into motion; He created separate worlds for every single human being in existence; each one exists for that human being alone. He's an artist, but he uses an economy of means, so that there's much duplication of themes and events and motives throughout the worlds."

"Oh," Larry replied softly, "now I begin to see what you're driving at. In some worlds, Napoleon won the battle of Waterloo—although only in his own world did *everything* work out just right for him; in this one he had to lose..."

"I'm not sure Napoleon ever existed in my world," Allison said thoughtfully. "I think he's just a name in the records, although some such person did exist in other worlds. In my world,

Hitler was defeated; Roosevelt died—I'd be sorry about that, only I didn't know him, and he wasn't very real, anyway; they were both just images carried over from other people's worlds..."

"All right," he said. "And everything worked out wonderfully for you, all your life, huh? You were never really sick, or hurt, or hungry..."

"That's about it," she agreed. "I've had some hurts and frustrations, but nothing really...well, really crippling. And every one has beeen important toward getting something I really wanted. or getting to understand something important. You see, Larry, the logic is perfect; I deduced it all from the evidence. There's no other answer that will stand up."

Larry smiled. "What does it matter what I think? You're not going to change your mind."

LARRY GAZED at the building in sick disgust. "That's a house?" he muttered at last.

Allison's eyes danced with happiness as she looked up at the great mansion. "What, darling? What did you say?"

The house was immense—and supermodern, like a pastry-cook's nightmare. Great columns reared up, connected by sloping beams and buttresses. The rooms were set one on top of each other like shoe-boxes, each at its own angle. The whole building was finished in some kind of bright metal shingle, a frightening butter-yellow. In the morning sun the house blazed and sparkled.

"What are—those?" Larry indicated some forlorn plants snaking up the irregular sides of the house. "Are those supposed to be there?"

Allison blinked, frowning a little. "What did you say, darling? You mean the bougainvillia? That's a very exotic plant. It comes from the South Pacific."

"What's it do? Hold the house together?"

Allison's smile vanished. She raised her eyebrow. "Darling, are you feeling all right? Is there anything the matter?"

Larry moved back toward the car. "Let's go back to town. I'm getting hungry for lunch."

"All right," Allison said, watching him oddly. "All right; we'll go back."

●

That night, after dinner, Larry seemed moody and unresponsive. "Let's go to the *Wind-Up,*" he said suddenly. "I feel like seeing something familiar, for a change."

"What do you mean?"

Larry nodded at the expensive restaurant they had just left. "All those fancy lights. And little people in uniforms whispering in your ear. In French."

"If you expect to order food you should know some French," Allison stated. Her face twisted into an angry pout. "Larry, I'm beginning to wonder about you. The way you acted out at the house. The strange things you said."

Larry shrugged. "The sight of it drove me temporarily insane."

"Well, I certainly hope you recover."

"I'm recovering each minute."

They came to the *Wind-Up.* Allison started to go inside. Larry stopped for a moment, lighting a cigarette. The good old *Wind-Up;* he felt better already, just standing in front of it. Warm, dark, noisy. the sound of the ragged dixieland combo in the background—

His spirits returned. The peace and contentment of a good run-down bar. He sighed, pushing the door open.

And stopped, stricken.

The *Wind-Up* had changed. It was well-lit. Instead of Max the waiter, there were waitresses in neat white uniforms bustling around. The place was full of well-dressed women, sipping

cocktails and chatting. And in the rear was an imitation gypsy orchestra, with a long-haired churl in fake costume, torturing a violin.

Allison turned around. "Come on!" she snapped impatiently. "You're attracting attention, standing there in the door."

Larry gazed for a long time at the imitation gypsy orchestra; at the bustling waitresses; the chatting ladies; the recessed neon lighting. Numbness crept over him. He sagged.

"What's the matter?" Allison caught his arm crossly. "What's the matter with you?"

"What—what happened?" Larry waved his hand feebly at the interior. "There been an accident?"

"Oh, this. I forgot to tell you. I spoke to Mr. O'Mallery about it. Just before I met you last night."

"Mr. O'Mallery?"

"He owns this building. He's an old friend of mine. I pointed out how—how *dirty* and unattractive his little place was getting. I pointed out what a few improvements would do."

LARRY MADE his way outside, onto the sidewalk. He ground his cigarette out with his heel and shoved his hands in his pockets.

Allison hurried after him, her cheeks red with indignation. "Larry! Where are you going?"

"Goodnight."

"Goodnight?" She stared at him in astonishment. "What do you mean?"

"I'm going."

"Going where?"

"Out. Home. To the park. Anywhere." Larry started off down the sidewalk, hunched over, hands in his pockets.

Allison caught up with him, stepping angrily in front of him. "Have you gone out of your mind? Do you know what you're saying?"

"Sure. I'm leaving you; we're splitting up. Well, it was nice. See you sometime."



The spots in Allison's cheeks glowed like two red coals. "Just a minute, Mr. Brewster. I think you've forgotten something." Her voice was hard and brittle.

"Forgotten something? Like what?"

"You *can't* leave; you can't walk out on me."

Larry raised an eyebrow. "I can't?"

"I think you better reconsider, while you still have time."

"I don't get your drift." Larry yawned. "I think I'll go home to my three room apartment and go to bed. I'm tired." He started past her.

"Have you forgotten?" Allison snapped. "Have you forgotten that you're not *completely real?* That you exist only as a part of my world?"

"Lord! Are you going to start *that* again?"

"Better think about it before you walk off. You exist for my benefit, Mr. Brewster. This is *my* world; remember that. Maybe in your own world things are different, but this is *my* world. And in my world things do as *I* say."

"So long," Larry Brewster said.

"You're—you're still leaving?"

Slowly, Larry Brewster shook his head. "No," he said. "No, as a matter of fact, I'm not; I've changed my mind. You're too much trouble. *You're leaving.*"

AND AS he spoke a ball of radiant light gently settled over Allison Holmes, engulfing her in a glowing aura of splendor. The ball of light lifted, carrying Miss Holmes up into the

air, raising her effortlessly above the level of the buildings, into the evening sky.

Larry Brewster watched calmly, as the ball of light carried Miss Holmes off. He was not surprised to see her gradually fade and grow indistinct—until all at once there was nothing.

Nothing but a faint shimmer in the sky. Allison Holmes was gone.

For a time Larry Brewster stood, deep in thought, rubbing his jaw reflectively. He would miss Allison. In some ways he had liked her; for awhile, she had been fun. Well, she was off, now. In this world, Allison Holmes had not been completely real. What he had known, what Larry had called "Allison Holmes," wasn't any more than a partial appearance of her.

Then he paused, remembering: as the ball of radiant light had carried her away, he had seen a glimpse—a glimpse past her into a different world, one which was obviously *her* world, her real world, the world she wanted. The buildings were uncomfortably familiar; he could still remember the house...

Then—Allison had been real, after all—existing in Larry's world, until the time came for her to be transported to hers. Would she find another Larry Brewster there—one who saw eye-to-eye with her? He shuddered at the thought.

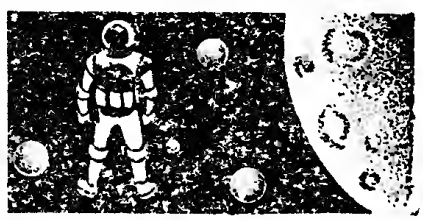
In fact, the whole experience had been somewhat un-nerving.

"I wonder why," he murmured softly. He thought back to other unpleasant events, remembering how they had led him to greater satisfactions for their having happened—richness of experience he could not have appreciated without them. "Ah well," he sighed, "it's all for the best."

He started to walk home slowly, hands in his pockets, glancing up at the sky every now and then, as if for confirmation...

★

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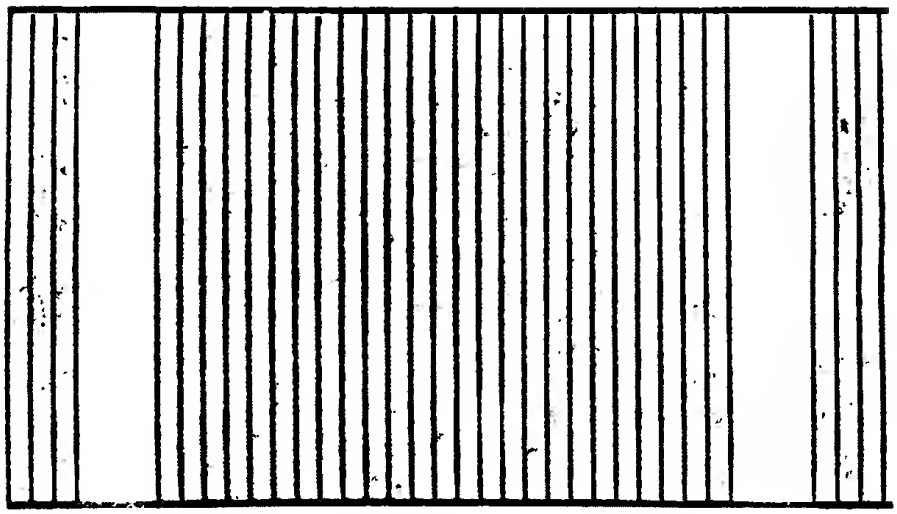


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It is a terrible thing, when the being who has exalted you returns and tells you that you have accomplished little...

An Ironic Novelet by Robert Abernathy

(Illustrated by Paul Orban)

FOR GENERATIONS, the People had inhabited the valley, scarcely venturing beyond the great rock mountains that walled it. To the east, they knew, lay the waterless desert; no one could say how wide. In the west, were greener and more fertile valleys, and an alien horde of a darker race. These, in a time that was fading from men's memories, had driven the People to their last refuge on the desert's edge.

Southward also was desert; but to the north, the land rose higher and higher, mountain above mountain, to the great pine-clad tablelands. There dwelt giants and gods; no man living had seen them.

The People lived hardly from the arid land; only once a year they enjoyed abundance, when the rains came and the earth was green. To hold starvation from them, they cast lots at the birth of every child; if the omen was evil, the child was carried into the desert to die.

Once in high summer, in the days when Henzen was leader of the People, three youths climbed the eastern mountains to look for birds' eggs. The People feared the mountains, and only in desperation invaded the hollow crags where owls and hawks nested; but the rains had come late, and there was famine in the valley. So the three climbed trembling, clutching spears and axes, their gathering baskets slung about their necks.



Only Kiin escaped, jumping back as the monster struck . . .

The oldest and strongest of them was Kiin, firstborn of Sorim.

In a ravine of the mountain's slope, half-choked with rock-fragments from above, they met their terror in bodily form. A monster had made its dwelling in a cave under fallen boulders, and it heard them and waited. Then it came crabwise, swiftly, out of its hiding, and before the boys could find footing to make a stand it had taken two of them in its mighty seizing arms and squeezed out their lives.

Only Kiin leaped recklessly backward into space beyond the thing's ten-foot reach, striving to break his fall with his spear. Bruised and half-stunned among the rocks, he saw the monster carry his dead companions into its hole. When the shadow hid it, he tried to rise; but his leg had wedged into a crevice, and the effort to move it made the brilliant day swim and grow dark before his eyes. Beneath the blazing sun he felt cold creeping within him; but he gripped his broken spear and waited.

A scuffing and rattling of rocks in the burrow. The monster sidled into the open, turning its hairless head from side to side with slitted eyes. It saw Kiin. It dropped to all fours and scuttled awkwardly, yet a g i l e l y, across the rock-slide toward him.

At that moment, the god Kasson—who, three days before, had left the northern forest land and was skirting the valley along the backbone of the range—had halted on the jutting cliff-edge above the monster's cave. He

saw the trapped youth facing his death with courage, and, god though he was, felt pity. As the monster hesitated an instant before the splintered spear, Kasson lifted the weapon he carried.

YOUNG KIIN heard the echoing crash and saw, as in a dream, the monster leap convulsively into the air and go rolling and thrashing down the slope—to fetch up sprawling like a great killed spider against tumbled boulders, many yards below. He raised his eyes, and saw the god standing against the sky a hundred feet above him. He saw with a sense of delirium the gleam of metal in Kasson's hands, and the awe-inspiring beard. And he fainted.

Kasson told no one the mission that had led him this way. From chance remarks, they learned only that he meant to go alone, into the southern desert, an act which the People thought daring—even for a god. But he was in no hurry; he stayed with them many days after he had brought the hurt boy Kiin into the village at the mountain's foot. And the People were glad; for not even in the memory of the old man Monsuu, who was almost idiotic with his great age, had a god come to visit them.

He showed special favor to Kiin, who, with a broken ankle, would very likely have died, save that Kasson laid his hands upon him to heal him. And the People knew that Kiin was destined for great things; it was plain that his life was sacred, since the god had twice saved it. Some began saying that Kiin would be leader, that he had learned from his benefactor secrets to make the People great and victorious over the brown horde. In truth they talked often together alone, the god and the boy.

But Kasson spoke freely also to others who had courage to come to the house they had given him—to Henzen, the leader; to the old man Hwalzen; and even to the sorceress Musenez, who had more than once barely missed stoning on account of her evil wisdom. The god was a friend to all. Yet they were few who dared sit face-to-face with him, and look upon the great black beard that fell to his chest and was sign to them of his godhead; for the People were beardless.

To all the People, Kasson gave gifts of knowledge. To Henzen he revealed a way to chip flints with fire and water; a way to bank earth about tender plants so that fewer died in the scorching noon; a way to straighten shafts for spears (and this was very helpful, since in the valley grew little wood that was not gnarled and crooked); a way to make magically-successful traps for rabbits and ground-squirrels.

With Hwalzen, the wise old man, Kasson spoke of strange matters that, to most of the People, meant nothing: of sun and moon and stars; of life and death and immortality; of how men came upon the earth, and of what was before they came. And many of these sayings passed beyond the understanding of Hwalzen; for who can fathom all the mysteries of the gods?

As for Musenez, the witch, though she talked many times alone with Kasson, she kept his words to herself, and grew more feared thereby. However, it became known that Kasson had taught her something of the art which had made the boy Kiin whole again; and the People, when sickness or injury fell on them, crept in secret to the sorceress.

Sometimes, as Kasson walked about through the villages of the People, watching their work and their play, they glimpsed on his bearded face a faint half-smile that was tinged with a strange sorrow. To some who saw him then, it seemed—although he walked among them in human form and was little taller than the men of the People—that Kasson towered far above them, looking down from some unimaginable height. And others—among them, old Hwalzen—felt that the height was of years; the face of the god was like that of a man in his strength; but from his eyes looked age-

less wisdom, the remote sad wisdom of the immortal.

ONLY ONCE his composure was broken. When the second girl-child of Hek, the leader's daughter, had been born and, the lot having been evil, they were carrying the child away, Kasson was standing near the house, and heard the cries of the young mother. And one who saw him then fled away in fear, for the god's face was terrible. But Kasson said nothing, and the rite was completed.

Later he spoke of this to Hwalzen.

"It is the law of Shanon, the god, who was with us long ago."

Kasson nodded slowly, as if remembering.

Hwalzen leaned forward tremulously. "Is it true—as the stories say—that Shanon will return some day to lead us?"

"No..." Kasson's dark gaze came back from a far distance; he saw the old man's disappointment, and tried to soften the blow. "All things are possible, but...I do not think Shanon will return. However, you do right to follow his laws; they are hard, but they are wise."

"Life is hard," said Hwalzen dully, and a look of bitter understanding gave his wizened countenance a queer resemblance to the young-seeming face into which he peered. "If we did not obey the law...you know, most of the People do not even understand that it would be possible to disobey it; but if we did not, there would soon be many too many, and great hunger. It is better that some should die before they have taken firm hold on life. Among the brown people they do not kill the young; but they eat each other."

A new thought struck the old man, and his eyes grew intent on the bearded face. "Perhaps," he suggested, "you will stay with us and lead us in Shanon's stead."

Kasson shook his head. "That I cannot do," he declared. "I must go on—and soon, now that the rains have begun and the heat is less. But I will come back, when I have fulfilled my purpose yonder"—he flung out a hand toward the south, where the blue clouds of afternoon were gathering—"and will remain here again for a time. And I will teach the People again."

IN THE MEANTIME, Kiin had recovered with scarcely a limp—thanks to the healing-power of the god. He accompanied Kasson on the latter's frequent walks about the valley, marching proudly by his protector's side while others looked on from an awe-struck distance. Afterward when Kiin was alone, those his own age—and even the older ones—drew back from him shyly. If he missed human companionship, he made up for the loss in exploiting his new position as divine favorite. A novel air of command sat on him, and people instinctively moved to obey his confident orders. Henzen began to look with jealous suspicion upon the arrogant youth—and Henzen's two sons, Ekeblek and Lesnuud, with open fear.

But Musenez, the witch, invited Kiin into her house and gave him food and a charm which, she said, would make him irresistible to any or all of the girls of the People. And, in truth, Kiin had little difficulty from that time on in making any conquests he desired.

There came the day when Kasson left the valley. Kiin wept bitterly, and with him all the People. But Henzen was secretly glad.

Kasson bade them goodbye with upraised hand; he carried again the weapon with which he had killed the monster; and belted round his body were the long rows of gleaming metal cases, each of which—he told them—contained a death of man or beast. He wore the familiar look of faintly-wry amusement as the People bowed themselves low before him, returning his salutation of farewell.

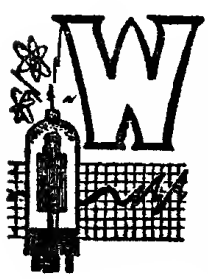
Then Kiin, alone of all, stepped forward boldly and extended his right

hand to the god. Kasson looked sharply at the youth, then gripped the hand briefly, smiling, before he turned to go. And the People continued to kneel in the dust—as if they knelt before Kiin, who stood erect and exalted before them.

From that time forward there was a widening rift in the ranks of the People, and a worm gnawed the heart of Henzen. He, who also had talked with Kasson, had not the same reverence as the others for the semi-divine aura surrounding Kiin; he would have killed the young man—for Kiin was accepted now as a man—without hesitation, had he not feared the natural and human consequences of the deed. There were too many who believed.

And, more ominously still, around Kiin grew up a faction of the young men, who followed and obeyed him as if he—and not Henzen—were the leader. The People had always been ruled by their elders; and to this rebellious band of youth, a chief of their own years was an intoxicating novelty. They swaggered, these satellites of Kiin, and trampled on the privileges of the old. And while Henzen hesitated and raged in secret, a new generation rose up which mocked his authority. His sons, the legitimate heirs of power, were outcasts among their contemporaries.

2



WHEN IT was already obvious that Henzen must act or be lost, an irruption of the brown horde delayed his decision still further. In the battle, which lasted two days and nights in the western passes, Kiin and his young men fought as a close-knit group, covering themselves with the new glamor of warlike glory. Henzen had no joy of the victory or the spoils. His lowering sullenness throughout the festival that followed failed to eclipse the radiant triumph of Kiin.

Now Henzen bethought himself of a way to assert his authority—if any remained to him—over the insolent youth; he remembered that Kiin, now long since of age for a hunter and warrior, had never performed the arduous ceremonies which by custom signalized the admission of a boy to the status of manhood. The youth of the People underwent ingenious tests of courage and endurance, devised by his elders—who thereby eased a conscious or unconscious jealousy of the rising generation—before receiving this confirmation. It might be possible, brooded Henzen further—a large number of the older men were still devoted to him—to arrange that his rival fail to survive the tests.

So the leader stood up resolutely in the midst of the victory-feast. When his ominous stare had silenced the revelers, despite the wine they had drunk, he raised his voice to accuse Kiin of neglecting the custom of his folk.

In a still deeper hush of expectancy the young man rose lithely from his place on the opposite side of the circle in which sat the chief men of the People, and into which he had thrust himself unasked. Coldly he returned Henzen's glare, saying: "Whether I am a warrior now—ask the dead that I left on the mountains."

Henzen's sunburned face grew darker with swelling fury. "You are not a man, because you have not fulfilled the ritual. I say it because it is the law!"

"And I say that your ritual is a sport of stupid and worn-out old men—like you."

With a deadly deliberation Henzen bent into the shadow at his feet and picked up the spear he had brought. But he was shaking as he raised it. "I am your leader; I command you to fulfill the rite."

"You are not my leader," retorted

Kiin without flinching. "I belong to Kasson."

"I will kill you," threatened Henzen, and revealed his pitiful weakness, in that he substituted the menace for the deed.

"You cannot," answered Kiin coolly; "I am Kasson's."

Henzen's face twisted, and he swayed on his feet; then he threw the spear. Kiin did not move, and the shaft passed him by. And Henzen toppled forward without a cry and lay with his face in the fire, unmoving.

Then there was no doubt any more. By the time of the spear-cast the whole festival encampment, overflowing the largest village of the People, had known that the moment was come; many of them had seen the god's vengeance strike Henzen down. Kiin's young men dealt then and there with two or three unregenerate old fools who still took the part of the dead leader; and likewise they dealt with Henzen's sons. Lesnuud, the elder, was speared through before he could make his escape; and when later they ran down Ekeblek hiding in a gully, they slew him shamefully with stones.

SO KIIN was leader of the People. And though still a young man—he had not yet taken a wife—he proved no more unwise than his predecessors; and in some ways, perhaps he was above them. With ruthless energy he drove the People—apart from his picked band of warrior-partisans, led by his trusted lieutenant Dewn—to greater industry in their struggle for survival, and thus kept famine from their villages. With his fighting-men he invaded the eastern range, killed two more monsters which had housed in its crags, and made it safe for the food-gathering expeditions. He constructed more and bigger traps to provide the tribe with meat.

Musenez, who had from the first stood by Kiin with counsel and magic, found only one fly in the ointment—the fact that her granddaughter, Jezephaik, was not old enough to be married to the new leader. For the rest, Musenez received full measure of the frightened respect which was what she wanted from the People. To the vague dread of her sorceries was added the concrete fear of her influence on Kiin. Now, even when it was known for sure that she had cast a destructive spell on a neighbor's field, there could be no question of trying to intimidate her into removing it; all that could be done was to placate her with gifts. Thus she acquired substantial wealth in provisions, utensils and trinkets.

But the discomforts of Kiin's reign were not sufficient as yet to provoke rebellion—especially since his bodyguards had the best weapons and made up the cream of the tribe's fighting force. He won over some of the conservatives by wedding the daughter of the revered old chieftain Huuzed. And always around his kingship hung a mystic awe, the divine right to rule of one who had taken the hand of a god.

Among those who held to the belief in Kiin's destiny to lead the People was Kiin himself. But, search as he would among his own memories of the beginnings of his greatness, he could discover nothing of use to him now. Clearly he recalled Kasson's black-bearded features, the firm mouth, the wise eyes. But of Kasson's words and sayings he recollected little—and that little was either useless or incomprehensible, now as then. The god had spoken of a golden time that had been, and of a great future that must be—and had said that thus-and-so must be done to bring that future; but the thus-and-so was what Kiin would not remember.

HE REMEMBERED, though, that Kasson had once praised the boy Kiin for his quick intelligence—praise which Kiin had understood only dimly, for the People had no concept of

intelligence as such—only that of wisdom acquired by long experience of the world. But Kiin had learned—by experience—that the originator of new ideas may be superior to him who has mastered all the old lore; he tried earnestly to accomplish the will of Kasson, by setting his brain to work in original ways.

Easiest, since he had begun as a rebel, was to break customs. He took a second wife, shocking the monogamous People; he flaunted other traditions, with impunity, for he was the master. But nothing real seemed gained thereby; on the contrary, the People took to emulating their leader's lawlessness, and he had to punish them.

Then, during a heavy season of rains and floods, he rediscovered the purpose of the ancient system of ditches, which could still be traced over much of the valley-floor. There were old men who remembered a tradition that Shanon had built the ditches, though they could not say why. It came to Kiin, in a flash of insight, that they had been meant to channel the runoff water from the hills and carry it to the People's fields. He saw the possibility of an increased and assured crop and, of more drinking-water; he set about restoring the irrigation system.

By the time the job was finished, however, the rains were past and the ditches were as good as useless until next year; when the following rainy season arrived, the sketchy work of renovation had been almost wiped out by blown sand, by growing things, and by the carelessness of the People, who threw rubbish into the ditches. And the rains caught Kiin unaware, so that there was no use in renewing the effort. He shrugged and abandoned the project.

But he could not shrug away the ever-waxing awareness in his very bones that the drive, the youthful energy he had brought to the leadership, was failing. He was no longer young;



he was middle-aged. He had reached that time of life when a man realizes the fewness of his days, and gropes for some stay in eternity—some value, not transitory, to justify and give meaning to his life. It was a sign of Kiin's real superiority of mind that he could not find satisfaction in counting his past successes—the heights he *had* attained.

Was it only for this that Kasson had promised him a shining future?—for Kiin was convinced now that the god had done so.

Long since, Hwalzen, the wise, had died at a great age, repeating till the last the promise of Kasson to return and lead the People. Now Kiin's thoughts turned often to this other promise. Perhaps that was what the god had meant; rather than that the People should become great under Kiin's leadership. A the idea, Kiin felt a faint, undefined pang of jealousy—which he stifled with the reflection that Kasson was after all *his* god, whose triumph would be Kiin's—if Kasson returned.

He began to dream of that return, the more so as he thought he discerned the first mutterings of mutiny among his subjects. There was a new and fretful generation, on which Kiin's more-or-less-benevolent tyranny sat heavy; and the tyrant himself had demolished many of the barriers of tradition and respect, that had formerly held the young in check.

AT LENGTH Kiin conceived the idea of going forth to look for Kasson. In the preparation for that quixotic venture he felt some of the

eagerness of youth come back to him. He gathered together a company of his most faithful retainers, with Dewn, and many of the others who had first helped him to power, armed them with straight spears and sharp-edged axes; and taking food for many days, they marched toward the midnight.

Why northward, Kiin could not really have said, but in all the legends the home of the gods lay there. He remembered well enough that Kasson had journeyed toward midday from the valley of the People. But the god might have gone home by another road, without paying his promised visit.

After two days' march they found themselves on the high tableland, where the great pine forest sighed unendingly in a chilly wind. Here, in fable, was the land of the giants, beyond which dwelt the gods. And at the end of the next day's journey, where the mesa ended in a gorge that plunged to dizzying depths where a dark river muttered, they found a giant. His clean white bones lay outstretched, scarcely disarranged, at the foot of a mighty pine on the canyon's rim.

Kiin would have pushed on, but the motionless skeleton cast greater fear into his men than would have a score of living giants. What dreadful thing, they reasoned, could have slain a man who had stood ten feet high? That, and the known terror of the precipices, turned them back.

For the first time the leader was powerless to command his followers. Bitterly complaining, he accompanied the retreat; the men were sullen under his scolding.

When they had descended once more into their native valley, footsore and exhausted from their headlong pace on the back track, a man ran swiftly from the nearest village to meet the column. Gasping, he poured out his message: "Kasson has returned!"

The god had come as before unheralded, in the night following Kiin's departure... The chiefs of the People met Kiin and led him to the house where Kasson was lodged.

Outside the door Kiin halted and waved the deputation back. "I wish to talk alone with—my friend."

As he stooped and entered the single room, Kasson stood up ceremoniously and looked down from his great height, squinting against the light of the doorway. "You are Kiin?"

Once again, as so long ago, the god smiled and took Kiin's hand. When the man's eyes grew used to the darkness of the hut he saw that the stern face was unaltered, that the black beard fell crisply curling as of yore over the broad chest. And he felt with a poignant thrust what change there had been in himself since, as a boy, he had last clasped the hand of Kasson.

Then he saw too Musenez, the withered hag, who crouched immobile in the shadow behind Kasson. And she met Kiin's look and grinned in answer, screwing up her whole wicked old face.

Vague fear chilled Kiin; but he disregarded the witch and spoke only to Kasson: "Will you stay with us this time?"

The god nodded gravely. "That is my decision. I will remain here to help you, and live among you like one of the People." He paused, then added, "I have arranged with Musenez to marry her granddaughter, Jezephaik."

Kiin's thrill of anxiety became hot anger. He had never trusted Musenez far, and now he saw her scheming obscurely to undermine him. But he controlled himself. "It is good. My people will build you a fine house...one as large as the leader's house."

"And I," said Kasson, "will show the People how to build better houses—and many other things. There is very much to be done, Kiin, and I can see that you have done little since I left you."

3



IN THE YEARS that followed, the god kept his promise; he taught them a great deal which, left to themselves, the People would hardly have discovered. He taught them to make bows and arrows; to smelt copper; and to catch and tame the wild cattle which wandered now and then into the valley through the low passes of the southern range. He led them up into the pine woods to cut tall, straight trees for building houses, and over the mountains to surprise the brown horde on its own soil, and deal it a defeat which gave the People long peace from raids.

Through his lessons the ways of life were changed so greatly that many of the People felt themselves lost, adrift in the sea of change.

Kiin spoke, once, of his attempt with the irrigation-ditches; the god listened closely, with the wry half-smile that came so easily to him, then gave orders that the work be begun again, under his own supervision.

It was that which precipitated the storm of revolt, which would have broken over Kiin's head long before save for the return of his god. Leader of the mutiny was the once-trusted Dewn. It was put down bloodily; at the head of the warriors who remained loyal, Kasson overwhelmed the rebels, both by his generalship and by his terrifying presence. The work on the irrigation-system was finished; the rains filled the reservoirs; and the people had water beyond their wildest dreams.

But Kiin grew old. His strength failed and his eyes grew dim; he looked less and less to the future, and lived more and more with his memories. And bitter as gall, hot as a red-hot coal, was in him the recollection of Kasson's words on their second meeting: *"You have done little."* Slowly Kiin groped his way to the realization of how easy—how appallingly easy—it must be for an immortal, surveying the sweep of years without number, thus to sentence to ignominy the lifework of a man. *"You have done little."*

And there were other things that went to heap up resentment in his heart. The fright he had got from the revolt of Dewn had helped to change the erstwhile iconoclast, making him conservative despite himself; and, like so many of his subjects, Kiin felt bewildered, swept away and smothered by the innovations of Kasson. Cattle-breeding, carpentry, irrigation made life too complex for one man's understanding. Kiin found himself yearning for the old days, when life was simple and sweet...and when he was young.

More than that, Kiin, of course, hoped to see the eldest of his four sons, Salzen, take his place as leader of the People. Now Kasson also had begotten sons, three of them, from his wife Jezephaik; and the children of the god were noble youths, beloved by the People. There was no harm in that, of itself; but the sons of Kasson were the grandsons of Musenez. And Musenez still lived, an incredibly-aged, but still sharp and spiteful crone. It was she, Kiin felt sure, who sought, with a word well-placed in this and that ear, to turn the allegiance of the many from the family of Kiin to the sons of Kasson. There were still those who remembered that Kiin's power had come, in the beginning, from no more than a touch of the god. What then was the due of these, who were Kasson's flesh and blood?

In justice, Kiin did not see it as a contest between him and his divine patron, but solely as between himself and Musenez. Indeed, Kasson had shown scant interest in his offspring since their birth. With his wry smile, or sometimes with a look of some-



thing like sadness, he had watched them grow to young manhood; and he had left most of their education—as was moreover the custom of the People—to their grandmother, the witch.

THE OLD man fell sick as he brooded on it; and, feeling death near him, his tortured brain came at last to a decision. He cast about for men he could trust, and could think of none save his own four sons.

For them he sent, and he made them promise to do all their father's will. And they promised.

And they did his bidding the same day. They went first to the rich house of the witch and struck her down in the doorway, and found inside the youngest son of Kasson, a mere boy, whom they killed likewise; and they fell upon the two other sons of Kasson in the open outside the village, and slew them both, though one of the sons of Kiin remained also dead in the desert.

When the deed was known, it cleft the People more sharply than had been even in the time of Henzen or during the rebellion of Dewn. For many held to Kasson, crying vengeance on the murderers; but others, mostly of the older generation, flocked to Kiin and demanded that all the uncanny work of the god be rooted out.

But each side fought the other with the bows that Kasson had taught them to make.

The valley was divided between the two camps, too equally, so that for a time neither side could make head against the other. But Kiin, in the midst of his forces, knew with despair that he had lost; the power which had made weapons out of useless sticks would do that much again and more to destroy him. He could not match the wisdom of Kasson, the immortal.

However, the end was otherwise. On the fifth day in the morning, as Kiin, leaning heavily on his spear-bearer's arm, was consulting with his chiefs on top of a low hill, someone cried out, and they looked up to see Kasson approaching alone across the desert from the west. He had passed the sentries unseen.

KIIN SHIVERED as he looked once more on the god. Then he waved his babbling henchmen aside and advanced tottering, but resolute, to meet his enemy.

Kasson said brusquely, "This quarrel of ours it must be forgotten now." And as Kiin only stared his question, "Last night the brown hordesmen crossed the mountains. They are attacking, now, the villages my people held. As you can see." He gestured back the way he had come, and now everyone saw the spire of smoke that was rising steadily higher, straight into the still morning air.

By noon the Peolple were united once more against the common disaster. And before sundown battle was joined on the plain, a battle that raged far into the night with terrific slaughter.

It was clear that the rulers of the horde had learned of the People's division, and had come to destroy them once and for all. Never before had they passed the mountains unresisted with such a host. On the open desert, before the village of Nuhl, the People made their stand against overwhelming numbers.

Toward dawn the moon went down and fighting ceased—both armies scattered, disorganized in the blackness. The bows and bronze weapons

of Kasson had wrought great havoc, but it could not be enough. The defending warriors, those who still lived, fell back and among the swarms of women and children, who had fled the villages, and huddled through the night in helpless fear behind the fighting line. Now these infected their men with the contagion of terror; and all that remained of the People was a panicky mass, crying and stumbling in the night. The darkness was the world's end; beyond it lay only the cannibal horde.

Somehow, Kasson found his way through the dark and the route to a mean hut in the village. Kiin was there, abondoned by all the chiefs; his sons had died in the battle. Everyone knew it was the evil Kiin had done that had brought destruction upon the People. But they had not harmed him: vengeance was Kasson's.

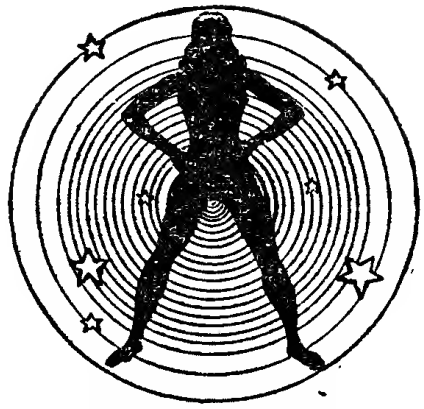
But the god only greeted Kiin in words that held no anger, and lowered himself wearily to the earth floor beside the huddled old man. The doorway of the hut faced east; and already they could distinguish the boundary of earth and sky.

The god said, "There is no time for escape; they will be over us as soon as it is light."

The whimpering of the doomed People came from far away and near, all around. Kiin's voice cracked harshly as he spoke: "It is all my fault; slay me now, Kasson, but save the People."

"I cannot," replied Kasson in a low level voice that buried all hope. "The battle is lost, and in the morning, it seems, we will all be dead... Yes, gods die too, Kiin, even as men. But that *you* still think of saving the People—that is something. It means I was not wholly mistaken in you; though, of course, I expected far too much."

THE WORDS of his god touched on what was still for Kiin, through all disasters, the burning question of his life. He cried out,



"What did you expect? What should I have done?"

"It does not matter, now; it is not your fault... I do not know whether I can make you understand what these things have meant to me, because we come of different worlds. To me, Kiin, you were an experiment. One of my experiments; my children were another—wherefore I cannot regret them too greatly—and the whole People was a third." To the blank silence he explained, "An experiment is an attempt that failed."

"But what attempt—" began Kiin in a stifled voice.

"You, or your People, cannot be blamed that this last battle has been lost." And Kiin sensed that the battle of which Kasson spoke was not merely the struggle with the brown horde. "A greater battle was fought—and lost—long ago, and because of that you suffer. I will tell you its story, if you like." Kasson glanced at the eastern sky.

"Tell me," said Kiin.

"Ah, you still have curiosity—from that quality I once hoped for much.

"But the story is this. In the far past—before the People were, in the time when I was a boy—the earth was populated by a single race of the beings which you call gods. They were divided into nations, and those nations were so numerous that in one of them your People—yes, and the brown horde—would be lost like a single grain of sand in the desert.

"They—we—were powerful magicians. We could fly; we could move mountains; we could make our voices heard all over the world. Most wonderful of all were the weapons we had. You would not understand such things as weapons, since they were nothing a man could wield, but more like great natural disasters—winds and fires and burning lights, that one people could send to destroy another. And the nations were often at war.

"In my own youth, the last war of the gods began. Its armies and its dead were counted in thousands of thousands, for the warring peoples smote one another with unimaginable forces, even with the fire of suns. So they fought, and died not like gods, but like vermin."

Kasson's voice had risen, with a greater intensity of feeling than Kiin had ever known him to show before. He paused; and when he spoke again it was flatly, wearily: "We are not gods. The people of the old time were men, and you are their descendant as surely as am I."

"But..." Kiin choked and swallowed with effort. "But you are not like me. You are...immortal."

THE OTHER chuckled drily. "I am coming to that. As the war dragged on, and the millions died, the advantage for a time was with that side whose numbers were greater. But on the other side there were many wise men called scientists; among whom were those who understood the fire of suns, and those who understood the secrets of the seed which is planted in the continuing war. There were men And they learned that when the seed is touched by sun-fire, there is a chance that the young will be unlike their parents—and also a chance that the offspring so changed will pass the changes on to their own children.

"They learned to work such changes purposely, and did so to create various new breeds of men to fight as soldiers in the continuing war. There were men of great stature, and other hideously formed for combat—the giants of whom you know, and the hated monsters; and there were very small men, and ones who could climb like squirrels, and ones who could swim under water like frogs... But all these were little more than experiments, and a few of them survive today. Some few monsters were also born, no doubt, by accident; for as I have said, they used the sun-fire itself as a weapon, and in some places, the fire lingered in the earth for years.

"But the great achievement of the scientists was the creation of a race of men that attained their growth, and bred children, in about a tenth of the time which men till then had required. Before then, you see, they had been able to speed up the production of every resource of war except manpower. Already a whole generation of fighters had died, but with the new race they could replace their armies in a few years and continue to replace them. It did not matter that the useful lives of the new men were short, for the average life of a combat soldier in that war was only a few months anyway.

"It was not long, of course, until their enemies learned of and duplicated the new creation. All the peoples of that time were very wise in some ways.

"There were disadvantages, all the same, in addition to the difficulties of feeding and clothing the swiftly growing race and providing arms for the soldiers. One of the great superiorities of men—or the 'gods'—over the beasts had always been their long, long period of immaturity—which was twice the lifespan of your oldest men —and which, as you may imagine, served them for the accumulation of enormous wisdom, which they had time to use in their long adult lives. The new breed had hands, and a complex brain, and speech; but their growth and aging was like that of the animals. At an age when the infants

of the older race had scarcely learned to talk, they were adults—soldiers and women fit to bear children.

"They learned what they were taught, to fight, but they had no time to learn the complicated skills and knowledge of the long-lived people. And every year, as the war went on, the new men became more numerous, and the old race fewer and fewer—because of the great difference between their breeding-rates.

"At last the war that had been begun with the fire of suns was finished with knives and sticks and stones, as the great armies fell apart, and fought one another in ever smaller bands, and starved, and devoured each other. From that time it has been some thirty years—more than ten generations of your people.

"During most of that time I have wandered over the face of the earth, seeing the short-lived people take root in their tribes, and make their ways of life with the ignorance and folly and cruelty of great children, and thrive or suffer, and forget. For eleven years now—since about the time of your grandfather's birth—I have not seen or heard of any other survivor of my own kind; perhaps I am the last.

"So I returned to the People three years ago and began the experiments of which I spoke. I wanted to know if your kind could be taught up to a higher civilization, though I knew that the god whom you call Shanon—and whom I knew, and who is dead now—had failed in this. But I am sure now that whatever I might have done in the remainder of my lifetime would not have endured long after my death. And my sons—I had hoped against hope that they might be like me, though it is certain that the new strain is dominant—that the children are shortlived. Nevertheless, if my sons had lived, some of their descendants would have been gods; the law which governs such things was known in the old time. But they are dead."

Kiin's face was buried in his hands; he wept bitterly, silently, with childish, senile tears.

"I do not blame *you*, Kiin. You too were an experiment of mine. I saw in you a greater intelligence and curiosity and originality than the usual, and I hoped to build on that. But I did not reckon sufficiently with the shortness of your life—and I see now that I failed also to regard you as an adult, with an adult's passions and virtues and failings... If you had been born of the old race, Kiin, you would be a precocious child now; in fifteen or twenty years you would grow into a superior man. But as it is—you are seven years old, and your lifework is ended before it has had time to begin."

In the cold pale morning Kiin raised his bowed white head and peered into the face of the god. And he saw what he had not seen before: Kasson's black hair and his great black beard were shot with threads of gray.

4



NOT FAR AWAY, in the dawn light, the horde began to move. Screams tore through the silence. The brown people came across the desert in long skirmish lines, chanting in unison their war cries.

A handful of the People rallied on a rise of ground, where they fought off the swarming attackers until almost noon. Then the lines broke and the shrieking hordesmen rolled over them.

Kiin fell, slain by an ax-blow, at the feet of his god. They surrounded Kasson and would have struck him down, save that the leader of the horde had heard of a god among the People; he wished this god taken alive. So they fell upon Kasson with bare hands and dragged him bound but living to Yerk, general of the horde.

Yerk looked with interest upon the captive. "Where are his weapons?" he asked his men, but they could tell him nothing. Yerk repeated the question to Kasson, stumblingly, in the language of the People.

"I have none," said Kasson, and it was true; in his long wanderings in the south, he had exhausted the virtue of his magic weapon and had cast it away.

"Liar!" said Yerk and slapped him, not lightly, once on each side of the face. Kasson blinked and set his jaw.

"You are the fool," he answered stubbornly, "because I have nothing you want."

"Torture him," Yerk ordered his men.

They beat Kasson with the shafts of spears until he fell; then they began making a fire ready, but at that the victim rolled over, shielding his head, and cried, "What do you want?"

Yerk stood over him, grinning. "The gods have weapons. I know, because my great-grandfather talked with a god, and afterwards killed him and took what he possessed. But after a while it did not work any more. Where are your weapons?"



"I have none," repeated Kasson. But as the hordesman motioned to his helpers, he went on hurriedly, "But I know where the weapons of the gods are hidden."

"Tell me the place."

"I cannot tell you, but I can lead you there."

Yerk considered, then nodded slowly. And to his warriors: "Bind him well, but give him food."

THREE DAYS later, having burned the villages, trampled the crops, and wrecked the irrigation-system—lest any remnant of the People that might be hiding in the mountains should try to begin again—the brown horde marched once more, this time northward into the high country. They were a nomadic folk, and one way was to them much like another; but this way they had rarely gone before. They, too, feared the giants. But no giant let himself be seen in all the whispering pineland; and Kasson said that they had all died, because they were too large.

That was unintelligible to Yerk; but he thought, with satisfaction, that if the giants were really gone, this forest-country with its wealth of game—untouched for so long because of the fear that remained from the old time—would make a fair new home for his people.

In the evening of the fourth day, Kasson halted. He was gaunt now, covered with bruises from the beatings they had given him in their impatience, and he stumbled frequently; but his sunken eyes burned with a fixed fire.

"What is it?" growled Yerk.

The god pointed. "There."

It was a cave-mouth on the flank of a mountain that towered above the table-land a mile or more away. The entrance of a very large cave, apparently, but so masked by its union with the natural form of the mountain's jutting shoulder, and by the new growth of trees that covered it, that they might have marched past many times without seeing it.

Yerk licked suddenly dry lips. His slitted gaze darted to and fro, seeing the sweat beaded on the coppery faces of his warriors, their awed eyes. He

demanded hoarsely, "The gods' dwelling?"

A sardonic ghost of the old remote amusement passed over Kasson's haggard face. "There is no one alive there, now," he said; "the gods are dead."

Yerk thrust out his chest, gripping his stone-headed ax, bawling orders. A hundred of the horde went with their chief and his prisoner to seek the god-weapons; the rest were to encamp here, to rest from their heavy march and hunt fresh meat.

A roadway, hewn from the living rock by Titanic builders, had slanted up the mountainside. It was ruined now, and the climb was hard; nor did they see any sign that men had passed this way before them. The desertion of the place reassured the men of the horde, as did what they saw when, panting, they reached the top of the ascent: the cave-mouth was carpeted with blown soil and pine needles and fragments of fallen rubble, and no footprint had disturbed it.

AT THEIR leader's command they lit pinewood torches and ventured into the dank darkness, having first bound Kasson's hands once more as a precaution. After a dozen steps fear clutched them again, for the smoky glare of the torches showed that the cave was immense, and the form of its interior was disturbingly regular, making them feel that they had stepped out of reality into a fantastic geometric world. Underfoot, beneath the windborne detritus, was a queer surface of uncannily smooth stone.

Out of the shadows loomed a colossal winged shape. Incredibly huger than any bird, it dwarfed the invaders to insect smallness; reflections as of many eyes winked down from its lofty head, and for a moment it seemed swooping... But Yerk seized a torch and brandished it on high, shrilling, "Look! Its wing is broken; it is covered with dust; and it does not move! It died long ago!" He



wheeled on the fettered god and thrust the flaring pine-knot almost into the bearded face. "Where are the weapons?"

Kasson coughed and jerked his head indicatively toward the darkness of the cavern's depths. Then, prodded by spears, he led the way. Other weird, unmoving shapes appeared from the gloom, and things flashed like great cats' eyes or gleamed like ice and fire.

They halted, huddled together, where the roof arched vaulted above them. Here was a row of squat, wheeled platforms, and on some of them lay great cylinders of dully gleaming metal, held in place by metal wedges.

"These are the weapons of the gods," said Kasson.

Yerk struck him across the face. "Do not lie! How can such things be weapons?" Merely to look at them, it was plain that any number of men would have been unable even to lift one of those things.

Kasson said stolidly, "I will show you how they work; untie my hands."

"You will tell me how the god-weapons work. Am I a fool?"

"Very well," answered Kasson wearily. "First, you must turn the round thing at this end. It will come loose, and you will find..."

"Shamsh!" snapped Yerk, and a hordesman came shakily forward. "Do as the god directs—and we shall see." Yerk knew that a weapon does not harm the man who wields it, but he was taking no chances, though his brain was ablaze with eagerness for the power soon to be his.

The dead Kiin might have remembered and understood a saying of his god: *"You would not understand such things as weapons..."*

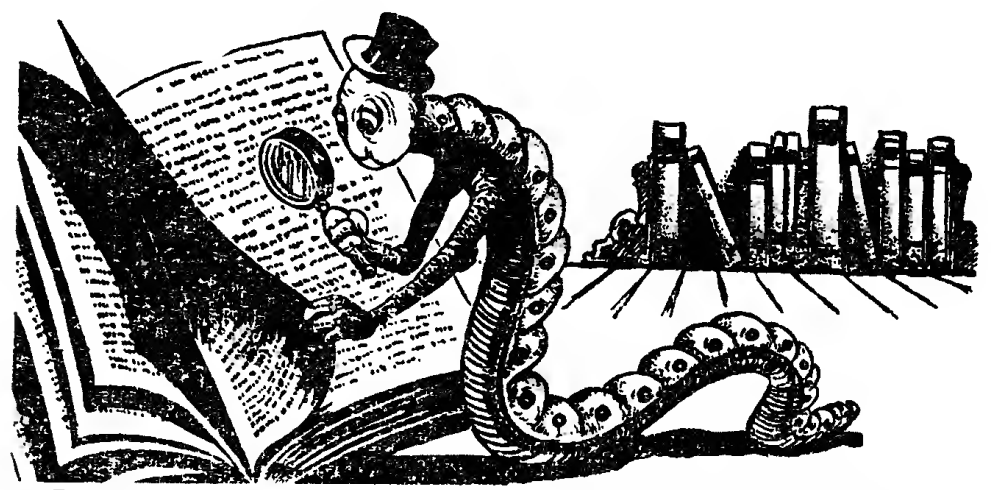
"Now," said Kasson quietly, "you must move the little arrowhead until it points straight up, and then..."

FOR MILE after mile the great pine forest was fallen and burning. The remnant of the horde that still lived struggled through a flame-bright hell to escape; now and then one dropped, burned or exhausted, and was hidden by the billowing smoke and buried under the rains of hot ashes and cinders that fell from the sky; and still more perished as the crown-fire overtook them, whipping through the tops of the still standing pines. None survived who had seen the mountain burst asunder and rain earthward again; but some noticed that the felled trees all lay pointing away from the direction in which Yerk had gone with his captive god, and they knew by this sign that it was the vengeance of Kasson.

In the end, some two hundred won clear and found their way back to the land of their people. Not until much later—in their time-reckoning—could it be known whether these had truly escaped, or if they carried within their bodies the seeds of a new age of change.

And the fiery cloud that had risen from the crucible of Kasson's last experiment was carried by the prevailing winds far eastward, over the fertile prairie lands, and was washed to the earth by rains.

★



Readin' and Writhin'

THE COMEDY of manners is a well-established literary offering, and I suppose you could put it in the same pigeonhole as satire—but there's an important difference. Satire tends to be sharp, acid and rather grim; this has the light touch, and gooses irreverently rather than jabs under the ribs. It isn't primarily concerned with imparting any message, as true satire usually is, but is content with taking casu-

al pot-shots at whatever strikes the writer as un-lethally absurd about present-day life. (That "present-day" is a relative term, of course.) Not that deathly folly isn't touched upon in this kind of humor, but that such is more often drawn from the (relative) past or the comfortably-far-away than from the here-and-now. It doesn't cut too deep, rarely containing inside-out tragedy, as in the art of Chaplin, but rather the delightful irritation of a Will Rogers. (Or, if you want a more highbrow example, I'd contrast Moliere's "Affected Ladies" and Voltaire's "Candide".)

Oldtime enthusiasts recall Stanton A. Coblentz' novels as examples of satire in science-fiction; and they are indeed examples, though on returning to them one finds a heavier hand than seemed to be present at first. But the comedy of manners is less in evidence in science-fiction, except for one gentleman who has pretty well cornered the market, so far as really memorable material goes. By this time, many of you have decided that I'm speaking of L. Sprague de Camp, and you may all go to the head of the class.

The book that inspires these comments is that delightful novel, "Rogue Queen", for which Doubleday asks a mere $2.75 from those who want a hard-cover edition. As with other de Camp novels, it's a neatly-plotted, fast-moving adventure story, which deals with the hilarious first contact between Earthlings and the bee-like Avtini on a far-off planet which isn't identified astronomically, and needn't be. (One reason for writing it off is, of course, the inescapable fact that nothing is quite the same once Sprague has tackled it; so vacationers who might like to see what a humanoid bee-culture is like will have to forget it and take the author's word about what it *was* like up to the time when the not-too-intrepid, but reasonably courageous explorers first landed.) Heartily recommended.

●

IT ISN'T often that a reviewer can agree with a jacket blurb, but I find myself quite in agreement with the blurb for Fletcher Pratt's "World of Wonder", offered by Twayne Publishers for $3.95. It's called "an introduction to imaginative literature", and, at this date, it stands for my money as one of the best. There's no attempt to coddle the neophyte with simple and simple-minded specimens of fantasy and science-fiction, no with-holding of first-class material. Now this, you'd say, is just as it should be; but in actual practice, there's a lot of unwarranted timidity on the part of anthologists and/or publishers.

Outside of a small cavil on the viewpoint which can claim Plato's "Republic" as science-fiction because it can be "defined as a logical extrapolation from accepted facts" (I hold with James Gunn's views—see "The Philosophy of Science Fiction", March *Dynamic Science Fiction*, pages 105/106—but not so grimly as to condemn non-believers to perdition.) The introduction strikes me as knowing and well-put; and the selections in the volume do not belie it.

I'm glad to see that the anthologist has not hesitated to include a duplication or two; when a given story really belongs, it doesn't matter whether it can be found in other collections. After all, this volume is presented for those who are not already well-read in science fiction and fantasy, or who have a several-foot shelf of other such collections.

The end-result is that, although this was not slanted for the aficianado, the book is one a great many of tried-and-true enthusiasts will be happy to own. A selection that includes H. Beam Piper's fascinating "if" story, "He Walked Around the Horses"; Isaac Asimov's ironic "The Red Queen's Race"; William Tenn's nearly-unbeatable "Child's Play"; Kipling's splendid, "The Finest Story in the World"; James Blish's memorable "Mistake Inside"; Kafka's terrifying "Metamorphosis"; and Judith Merril's still-powerful "That Only a Mother" is not a volume to be passed by—particularly when the rest of the inclusions are all of decided worth. There'd be room for "World of Wonder" on my shelf even if I had to buy it.

●

TO SAY THAT Judith Merril's collection, "Beyond Human Ken", subtitled "21 Startling Stories of Science Fiction and Fantasy", is not on the same level as the volume discussed above, would be telling the truth as I see it—but only a part-truth. The aim here is different, and the guiding rationale of the volume different—the gimmick is various and sundry forms of possible life—but the achievment does both her and the publishers credit. (It's Random House, and the price is $2.95.)

Particularly good, for my taste, are such items as William Tenn's "The House Dutiful"; Malcom Jameson's "Pride"; Eric Frank Russell's "The Glass Eye"; Robert A. Heinlein's "Our Fair City" (one of the most unusual—an intelligent whirlwind, believe it or not, if you didn't read this one in *Weird Tales* some years back); H. B. Fyfe's "Afterthought" (which many readers didn't care for when it originally appeared in *Future*, I must admit); and Mark Clifton's "What Have I Done". Two other stories which, perhaps, ought to have appeared in the previous sentence are Boucher's "Compleat Werewolf" and Lester del Rey's very popular "Helen O'Loy"; I didn't list them simply because I've never gotten around to reading the first story, and never liked the second. But I do like this volume as a whole.

★

EDGAR ALLAN POE—ANCESTOR



Whether Poe can be accepted as an ancestor of science-fiction is a moot point, but here's some evidence for your consideration.

by Robert A. Madle

(illustrated by Milton Luros)

ALMOST from the dawn of time, tales of fantasy, fear, and the cosmic unknown have been an essential portion of the literature of all races of the world. Folklore and ballads, replete with strange and unexplainable occurrences; satiated with demons, alien beings and similar creations of supramundane minds; have been passed down through untold centuries. It has been claimed that the only advance made during the dark ages (500-1300) was the intense propagation of fanciful expression inherited from previous eras. It was during these centuries that tales of vampires, werewolves, witches, and ghouls were first prevalent, and today they are still part of literature—perhaps even more so than they were in previous ages. However, it was not until the advent of Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849) that the tale of fantasy and the unknown, as we know it today, was perfected.

One of the basic emotions of man is fear, and perhaps fear of the unknown is most fundamental. Poe realized this, but what he did not realize was that the reader of fantasy, in order to appreciate it thoroughly, must have an imaginative mind, and must be able to detach himself from the humdrum of everyday life. Most of Poe's material was unappreciated, except in minor literary circles, because in his era people were either too absorbed in making a fortune, or in keeping themselves from starving to death. As a matter of fact, Poe was often on the verge of starvation himself, because of his inability to market, for any appreciable amount, articles and stories which later were accepted as literature.

Two of Poe's fantastic short stories have attained the stature of "classics

of literature." The reference is to "Ligeia" and "The Fall of the House of Usher." The first concerns a mysterious former wife who takes possession of the dying body of the narrator's second wife. The story is logically presented in the first person, but the reader is left with certain unanswered questions in his mind. For instance, did Ligeia really exist, or was she only the creation of the narrator's opium-infected mind?

Some consider "The Fall of the House of Usher" Poe's greatest story. It is amazingly well-written, artistically developed, and the continuity is exceptionally well-conceived from beginning to end. The opening line of the story is a masterpiece in itself:

> During the whole of a dull, dark, and soundless day in the autumn of the year, when the clouds hung oppressively low in the heavens, I had been passing alone on horseback, through a singularly dreary tract of country; and at length found myself, as the shades of the evening drew on, within view of the melancholy House of Usher.

The story builds up to a spine-tingling climax in which the entire remaining branch of the famous House of Usher is destroyed: the sister, brother, and the actual house itself. Poe, in this tale, makes obscure references to the possibility of inorganic life—to the possibility that the House of Usher possesses a certain life itself. It might be mentioned that this concept has been utilized quite often by Poe's successors.

POE WAS the originator of the now-prevalent custom of referring to dark, dank, mysterious volumes of forgotten lore, presenting titles of such non-existent volumes. This literary trick has also been employed very effectively by his successors. H. P. Lovecraft, who is rated above Poe by many fantasy connoisseurs, created the forbidden "Necronomicon" so effectively that collectors have advertised for it in trade papers. Poe was unsurpassed in depicting eerie and unknown lands and times: sometimes he would originate the names of various eldritch countries, and sometimes he used mythology as his source. He employed this device quite often in his poetry. To illustrate, here follows a few lines from "Ulalume," a poem which "has proved very much of a riddle to the commentators":

> It was night in the lonesome October
> Of my most immemorial year;
> It was hard by the dim lake of Auber,
> In the misty mid region of Weir—
> It was down by the dank tarn of Auber,
> In the ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir.

Undoubtedly *Auber* and *Weir* were merely figments of Poe's intense imaginative mind. As mentioned before, Poe had a penchant for using dark references to the dim, distant, eldritch past. He subtly hinted of things half-forgotten and better not remembered from bygone years and forgotten lands. He created an atmosphere which cannot fail to capture the fancy of an imaginative mind. The following quote from "Dream-Land" is apropos:

> By a route obscure and lonely,
> Haunted by ill angels only,
> Where an Eidolon, named NIGHT,
> On a black throne reigns upright,
> I have reached these lands but newly
> From an ultimate dim Thule—
> From a wild weird clime that lieth, sublime,
> Out of SPACE—out of TIME.

The last line, in particular, expresses a thought which must have been almost inconceivable when he wrote it. Even today the average man on the street would be unable to think of anything which lies "Out of SPACE—out of TIME." Of course, it's old hat with fantasy fans. The writer was fascinated by his use of the expressions *Eidolon* and *Thule*, and determined to investigate them thoroughly. It seems that there is an all-but-forgotten tome which reposes in the family vaults. This ancient volume has been handed down

from generation to generation, and it has been whispered that all who have attempted to peruse it from beginning to end were driven stark, raving mad. It is a huge volume, sinister in appearance, possessing a binding which is amazingly like—human skin. It is said that the author was that mad sorcerer, Ahnoyah Webuhh Styr who, it has been whispered, was the ill-conceived progeny of the ancient beings who existed billions of years before the dawn of man. The name of this almost forgotten volume is "Ydikhh Tszunn Aai ree." And, sure enough, within this tome were discovered definitions for both *Eidolon* and *Thule*. The former is merely an apparition or a specter, while the latter was the name given by the ancients to the northernmost part of the world. In this case Poe had used mythology as his source of reference.

In his "Philosophy of Composition," Poe states: "I prefer commencing with the consideration of an *effect*. Keeping originality *always* in view...." The following short quote from "The Masque of the Red Death" displays his use of *effect:*

> The Red Death had long devasta'ed the country. No pestilence had ever been so fatal, or so hideous... There were sharp pains, and sudden dizziness, and then profuse bleeding at the pores, with dissolution...and the whole seizure, progress, and termination of the disease, were the incidents of half an hour....

The modern writers of fantasy fiction keep Poe's words in mind; to wit, the following quote from "The Fiddler's Fee," a story written by Robert Bloch which appeared in a 1936 issue of *Weird Tales:*

> The door of the inn swung open and the Devil entered. He was as thin as a corpse, and whiter than a shroud in which a corpse lies. His eyes were deep and dark as graves. His mouth was redder than the pits below...it was assuredly he: Satan, Father of Lies!

Yes, it must be conceded that it sounds pretty hammy. But when one considers that it was written by a 16 year old lad it isn't so bad. It is interesting to note that Robert Bloch, a member of the so-called "Lovecraft School," has developed into quite an author. His little classic, "Yours Truly—Jack the Ripper," originally published in *Weird Tales,* has been anthologized ten times and presented via the radio at least four.

IN THE field of science fiction, as distinguished from the field of fantasy and terror, Poe was his usual versatile and prolific self. He conceived many of the basic plots and ideas of science fiction; and, although Jules Verne is generally conceded to be the "father" of science fiction, it is fairly obvious to the student of the genre that Verne owes his inspiration to Poe. A brief inspection of just a few of Poe's scientifiction tales will attest to the logic of this statement.

"The Unparalleled Adventure of One Hans Pfaal" is a tale involving the earth-to-the-moon concept and, although Poe utilizes a balloon to transport his intrepid traveler, it is as scientifically accurate as one could expect in 1835. The story describes in detail the actual trip—nothing more. Poe had every intention of writing a sequel involving Hans Pfaal's lunar explorations, but it never materialized. It appears that Poe was discouraged by his friends when he informed them that he intended to pass off both Hans Pfaal's voyage and his explorations as factual material.

Poe combined science fiction with the gullibility of the public in several other instances. In fact, the "hoax" appears to have been one of his favorite literary devices. One of the most famous and successful scientific hoaxes on record is "The Balloon Hoax" which was published in the *New York Sun,* April 13th, 1844, as a factual occurrence, and describes the initial crossing of the Atlantic in a large, dirigible-like balloon.

In at least two other instances Poe was rather successful in taking advantage of his public's gullibility. "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar," published as a factual article, tells of a scientific experiment in which M. Valdemar is mesmerized and kept alive even though he has, in reality, ceased to live. When the experiment is completed, and the mesmeric field is lifted, the body immediately turns into a pool of putrescent, protoplasmic slime. "Von Kempelen and His Discoveries," also a magazine article, utilizes the theme of transmutation of baser metals into gold. Suffice to say that many of Poe's successors also employed this theme.

Although Poe didn't originally conceive of the "Hollow Earth" idea, he was the first to popularize it in fiction. His "MSS. Found in a Bottle" and his "Narrative of A. Gordon Pym" both describe strange oceanic voyages, in which it is apparent that the passengers have as their destination the interior of the earth. These stories were inspired by John Symmes' pseudo-scientific theory that the earth is hollow, with tremendously large openings at the two poles. Probably the most popular stories utilizing this basic theme are the "Pellucidar" novels of Edgar Rice Burroughs. Incidentally, it is interesting to note that Jules Verne wrote a sequel to "A. Gordon Pym" at the turn of the century entitled "The Sphinx of Ice."

Other basic plots of science fiction employed by Poe can briefly be mentioned as follows: "Mellonta Tauta" describes the scientific utopia of the 29th century; "The Conversation of Eiros and Charmion" depicts the destruction of the earth by a cometary collision; "Some Words With a Mummy" deals lightly with suspended animation; and "The Masque of the Red Death" utilizes the concept of earth's population being destroyed by a deadly, unknown plague.

BUT ENOUGH of Poe's fantasy and science fiction for the nonce. Poe possessed varied talents, all unusual. It is not generally known, but Poe was indirectly responsible for Dick Tracy; The Saint; Super Detective Stories, et al. Yes, Poe was the originator of the modern detective story. Of course, he didn't apply that terminology to his stories—he termed them stories of "logic and ratiocination." It can readily be seen that his terminology had to be changed somewhat: it is difficult to imagine anyone walking up to his nearest newsstand and requesting a copy of *Super Ratiocination Stories*.

Poe, in Dupin, created the obvious forerunner of Sherlock Holmes. Dupin and the narrator, who are represented in a series of stories, the most famous of which is "The Purloined Letter," are easily identified as the inspiration for A. Conan Doyle's series involving Holmes and Watson. As a matter of fact, if one were to substitute the names of Holmes and Watson for Dupin and the narrator he might think that he were reading one of Doyle's effusions.

In his "Philosophy of Composition," Poe extends his energies to great lengths to inform his public how he created the famous poem, "The Raven"—which attained more response in his day than any other single piece he composed. He stated that every plot should be elaborated "to its denouement" before a word is written, and that when a writer commences to put his ideas on paper he should always start the epic with an effect. It is obvious that Poe followed his own advice, for his stories and poems invariably have effective beginnings. Later in the essay he remarked:

> Of all melancholy topics, what according to the *universal* understanding of mankind, is the *most* melancholy? Death—was the obvious reply....when it most closely allies itself to *Beauty*: the death, then, of a beautiful woman is, unquestionably, the most poetical topic in the world...

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THE GOLDEN MIRAGE

Legends die hard, but continued exploration of this planet shows less and less basis for some well-established myths.

SPECIAL ARTICLE

by L. Sprague deCamp

(illustrated by C. A. Murphy)



IF YOU WISHED to write a story about a hero who sets off into the trackless wilds of some unexplored land (on earth, that is, and not some other planet) and finds an isolated valley or plateau swarming with dinosaurs, and other formidable fauna left over from past ages; or discovers the ruins of an Atlantean city gleaming with gold and glittering with jewels; or comes across a lost race ruled by a golden-haired princess menaced by a wicked high priest who means to sacrifice her to the *Thing* because she won't submit to his lusts, where would you send him? Or, for that matter, where would you go to hunt such marvels yourself?

The problem has been growing for the last century, and has become acute in recent decades, with the improvement of the airplane. The spots marked "unexplored" on the map have shrunk and shrunk until there are hardly any left. Though there are large deserts in Arabia, Africa, Central Asia,

and Australia where hardly anybody lives, these have still been too well-tramped, and flown over, and mapped to make plausible sites for our story. North America is well-known. Africa is crisscrossed by airlines and automobile roads, and when you visit some primitive tribe to learn their mysterious rites, they are likely to ask you to admire their new high school. The ice-caps of Greenland and Antarctica still contain large areas that have not even been flown over, but these are bleak and unpromising sites for stories—though they have been used for this purpose.

That practically reduces us to a small area in the interior of New Guinea, and South America around the fringes of the Amazon watershed. South America has, in fact, for several centuries been the world's leading source of rumors of such prodigies, the main goal of searchers for the reality behind the rumors; and, since the opening up of the other continents in the past century, one of the favorite sites of stories about them. Let us see how this came about.

THE SPANIARDS were extraordinarily lucky, in their conquest of the New World, in coming upon the most civilized societies of that world—the Aztec Empire in Mexico; the Mayan tribes of Yucatan; and the empire of the Quechua kings or Incas in Peru, Ecuador, Chile, and Bolivia—almost at once. Having destroyed these societies by violence and treachery, and looted them of the considerable stores of gold which the Indians had been accumulating little by little over the centuries, the *conquistadores* looked around for more victims—under the understandable misapprehension that these areas represented a fair sample of the whole two continents and that more rich native nations were awaiting massacre and spoilation over any skyline.

In Ecuador, the Spaniards heard a curious story about a tribe that lived by Lake Guatavita, a small round lake in the crater of an extinct volcano near Bogota in Columbia. Every time this tribe installed a new chief, they performed an elaborate ceremony in the course of which the new *uzaque*, having been anointed with sticky resinous gum, was dusted all over with powdered gold, and then dove from a balsa raft into the lake and swam around until it had washed off.

The Spaniards soon found Lake Guatavita, but no *hombre dorado*—no gilded man. The fact was that these Indians had been conquered by another tribe shortly before, and the custom had gone out of use. But the gold-mad Spaniards would not admit that, even to themselves. If *el dorado* was not at Guatavita he must be somewhere else, as must the fabulously rich tribe that engaged in such an extravagant rite. So for a century Spanish dorado-hunting expeditions tramped back and forth across South America.

The legend grew with each retelling, until the simple village of the Muyscas became the great golden city of Manoa, where everybody of consequence was gilded afresh every day; and the mile-wide Lake Guatavita evolved into the great inland sea called Lake Parima, with Manoa on its north shore and tribes of headless men with faces in their chests on the south. This inland sea was not exposed as thoroughly mythical until 1800-02, when Baron von Humboldt plowed through 1700 miles of dense jungle along the divide between the Amazon and Orinoco watersheds, where the sea was supposed to exist.

Humboldt did however find one natural feature in that country even odder than an inland sea. It is well-known that no river in the world divides, one branch going into one watershed and one into another—with the one single exception of the Upper Orinoco. This does so divide, in the southern panhandle of Venezuela. The righthand fork turns north to become the great main Orinoco and so flows

into the ocean; the left fork, the Cassiquiare, flows across country into the Amazon watershed where it joins the Guaiania, which flows into the Negro, a major tributary of the Amazon.

When I say that the Cassiquiare flows across the divide between two watersheds, however, you must not think of it as climbing up one side of a ridge and down the other; for the country there is so flat that to locate such a divide would tax the skill of the ablest surveyor. This country, the Amazon-Orinoco divide, is also remarkable for a series of giant mesas surrounded by cliffs of almost unscalable steepness: Mounts Roraima, Duida, and Auyantepui, to name the outstanding ones. The first two of these have long been known, but Auyantepui was only discovered in the 1920's. Roraima—which stands where the boundaries of Brazil, Venezuela, and British Guiana come together—served as a setting for two early science-fiction novels: Frank Aubrey's corny "The Devil Tree of El Dorado" (1897) and Conan Doyle's excellent "The Lost World," which was not only made into a movie that is still shown at science-fiction conventions, but also still reads well after forty years.

All three mountains have now been explored. Alas, the explorers found no leftover dinosaurs—no land-animals larger than squirrels and mice, in fact.

OLD LEGENDS die hard—especially in South America, where rumors flourish as prolifically as revolutions. Stories of lost cities; lost races; rich mines; white Indians; pygmies; warrior women; and dinosaurs surviving from the Mesozoic, still buzz about the ears of the traveller as thickly as do the insect pests of that arthropodally rich continent. Now and then some new incident gives them an added stimulus.

Thus, certain tribes of Amazonia have the custom of cutting symbols on boulders. These are highly stylized pictures of animals (fish, lizards, horses, etc.); men, maps of sections of the nearest river; and similar subjects. They were observed as early as 1739, when the German surgeon Nikolaus Hortsmann saw them along the Rupununi River; other explorers such as Theodore Roosevelt have noticed them since; and ethnologists have seen modern Indians carving them, sometimes for magical purposes and sometimes merely for amusement.

To the eye of the credophile, however, the idea that savages might have cut these signs for religious or tribal reasons would be much too simple. To him they look like "hieroglyphics", and to them he attributes an Egyptian, Phoenician, Sumerian, Etruscan, Cretan, Hindu, or other exotic origin. These petroglyphs have been part of the stock-in-trade of Atlantists, and some South American savants like Bertoni the ethnologist—who ought to have known better—have gone off on similar tangents.

As South America has been more and more opened up, the rumors have fled before the light of exploration—as all proper ghosts should—and now huddle in the last large untamed wilderness of the continent: the northern part of the Brazilian state of Matto Grosso, and an indefinite area to the east—in the state of Goyaz—and to the west across the Bolivian border. This area has about the size and shape that Montana would have if it stretched out to half again its present east-west length.

Matto Grosso means "great forest" and the state of that name has about twice the size of Texas—that is, over half a million square miles. The southern half is fairly well-known, a cattle-country where the Borero Indians wear shirts and sometimes read newspapers. The northern part, however, is a jungle in which rise the main southern tributaries of the Amazon: from west to east, the Madeira, the

Tapajos, the Xingu (pronounced tah-pa-*zhoce,* shing-*goo.*) and the Araguaya. On the map, each of these dangles down from the Amazon like a branch dividing into twigs.

The whole area is nearly uninhabited except for Indians: Anauquas, Apinages, Aravotos, Bakiris, Calapalos, Camayuras, and others you probably never heard of: thinly-scattered tribes of a few hundred persons each. Most of them go completely naked and trim their hair to a soup-bowl cut with sharpened mussel-shells. The women raise a few simple crops, while the men hunt with blow-guns.

In disposition they range from the amiable Carajos and Camayuras to the fierce Chavantes, who kill all strangers on general principles and preserve their heads—though without shrinking them as do the Jivaros of Ecuador. When the Brazilian government, in setting up a chain of airfields across the region a few years ago, sent the aviator Antonio Brasilio to fly over the Chavante villages and drop gifts in an endeavor to make friends, the Chavantes sent up an anti-aircraft barrage of arrows, one of which went through Captain Brasilio's wing-tip. Then they burned the gifts.

In general the Indians' good-will varies inversely with the amount of contact they have had with *caraibas* (non-Indians). Thus, the ferocious Chavantes are said to have gotten that way as a result of being enslaved by early Spanish gold-seekers to work in their mines.

Such is the remaining land of lost cities. It is not strictly correct to speak of it as "unexplored" because it has been traversed many times, and in recent years flown over in all directions, so that the courses of at least the main rivers are now pretty well known.

IN 1743 A PARTY of six Portuguese; a dozen Negro slaves; and a train of Indians, set out from Minas Geraes into the interior to look for some fabulous mines, knowledge of whose location had perished with their mestizo owner in 1622. These people sent out a report by an Indian runner to the viceroy at Bahia, telling how on the central plateau—in the area that we are talking about—they had sighted the ruins of an immense city made of great stone blocks, and had also caught glimpses of a couple of white Indians. The report even included copies of the hieroglyphs, which they said that they had found engraved on the stones of the city.

After this report, nothing more was heard of this party. The report lay unheeded until unearthed about a century ago, when the Brazilian government sent an unsuccessful expedition to follow in the footsteps of their predecessors.

Then in the early 1900's the Krupps of Essen, convinced that this—or another lost city—existed in the western part of the Matto Grosso, organized a large expedition with pack-animals, guides, and Indians. They spent $500,000 of their armaments profits on this project; but the Indians vanished at their approach, showered them with poisoned arrows, and eventually they were beaten by logistics. That is, since neither explorers nor pack-animals can live on the country, they must carry nearly all their food and can go no farther than this fuel will take them.

In 1913 that most versatile of American presidents, Theodore Roosevelt, went down the Rio Duvida or River of Doubt (then represented on the map by a dotted line) to determine its true course. He took with him one of the outstanding characters of modern Brazil: Colonel (now General) Candido Mariano da Silva Rondon, explorer and Indian-administrator. They struggled through 900 miles of wilderness, enduring the usual calamities of disease, starvation, and boat-wreck, until they issued into the Madeira River. One man perished in

the rapids; another was murdered by a third, who escaped into the bush.

Then in 1925 came the Fawcett expedition, which became even better-known than that of Roosevelt and Rondon, and which might be taken as the culmination of all tales of lost cities and unknown lands in South America.

Lieutenant-Colonel Percy Harrison Fawcett, D.S.O., F.R.G.S., was a British artillery-officer, then nearing sixty. In his youth, he had served in Ceylon, Malta, and Hong Kong, as well as at home, and had gone exploring in Morocco. In 1906, his government had lent him to Bolivia to act as boundary-commissioner to help fix the line between Bolivia and Peru. In the course of this work, he nearly starved to death on the Rio Verde; and later, on the Heath River, he braved an hour-long bombardment with six-foot arrows from the warlike Guarayos—until by shouting words from a phrase-book he convinced them that his intentions were friendly.

When he had completed his surveying assignment, Fawcett retired from the army with the rank of major, and gave himself up to Brazilian exploration until World War I, when he was called back and brilliantly commanded a brigade of heavy artillery. After this war he went back into retirement and exploration.

TO JUDGE from what has been written about him, Fawcett was a man of great physical energy and endurance; infinite courage; and intense drive: hasty, ardent, impatient, and inclined to be brusque and overbearing with "natives". The easy-going Brazilians found his enthusiastic strenuousness a bit horrifying. A man of great versatility, he was also a competent artist and yacht-designer.

Moreover he possessed a strong mystical or credophilic tendency: a seer of visions and a dreamer of dreams. He dabbled in Spiritualism and lent, if anything, too ready an ear to those tales of treasure and prodigy that are South America's chief invisible export. In his youth, as a gunner-lieutenant in Ceylon, his interest had been aroused by mysterious inscriptions that he saw on a rock while rambling around the jungle looking for the alleged buried treasure of the Kandyan kings. He became a devotee of the cult of the lost Atlantis, and later became convinced that the lost city of the Brazilian expedition of 1743—either Atlantis, or one of its offshoots or colonies—lay in the northeastern Matto Grosso, somewhere between the upper Xingu and Araguaya regions.

Fawcett also credited other tales. Thus, in 1910, in an address before The Royal Geographical Society of London, he told of a rumored race of white-skinned, red-haired, blue-eyed Indians called Morcegos or "bats" from their noctunal habits. He said:

> *There may be curious things hidden in the forests of the Amazon basin. There are rumors of old ruins and strange animals—of tracks huge and unrecognized. Fables gather, of course, around unexplored places; but we must not forget that the African pigmy and the okapi were long discredited.**

Writing in 1916, he told how, on one of his trips, he almost reached the country of a race of cannibals covered with black hair all over, who lived in trees like monkeys and dispatched all visitors with clubs. "Beyond these ape-like people are, according to my informants, 'houses of stone'!... Can it be the lost 'City'?"** In speaking of the anaconda, the big sluggish South American relative of the python, he credited it with a "weird cry", which would raise one of a herpetologist's eyebrows, and claimed to have killed one sixty-five feet long, which would certainly hoist the other.

Such was the fascinating Colonel Fawcett. In 1919 he went back to

South America and set out from Cuyaba, the capital of Matto Grosso (and also the world's ipecac capital) to find his Atlantean city, his arboreal anthropophagi, his white Indians, his pigmies, and his leftover dinosaurs. He was defeated by floods and the defection of his Brazilian *camaradas,* a class who many explorers have denounced for cowardice, meaning that they display an invincible aversion to risking their lives for the whimseys of crazy foreigners.

Then in 1924 he set out again from England, this time with the backing of the Royal Geographical Society, to map the unknown land in the neighborhood of the Paramantinga and Tapajos Rivers, and to seek the other and more fascinating things that he believed the Matto Grosso to contain. With him went one of his two sons, Jack, and a friend of the latter—a young photographer named Raleigh Rimell.

They journeyed northeastward from Cuyaba into the watershed of the upper Xingu. Fawcett was purposefully vague about his destination, for, as he wrote a friend in Cuayaba, "I don't want to encourage any tragedy for an expedition inspired to follow our footsteps under the impression that it is an easy matter."

He got to the military outpost of Bakiri, where Rimell was suffering from an infected foot, and from there headed into the wilds. From Dead Horse Camp, forty miles northeast of Bakiri, he sent back his mules and his *camaradas,* both of which had proved useless for his purpose.

Then he went on with three Bakiri Indians. On the Kuluseu River he found a pair of bark canoes, whose owners had hidden in a creek, while calling on friends in the jungle. Fawcett coolly appropriated these boats and continued on down the river in them until he reached the Anauqua village. Here he sent the three Bakiris back up-river with the canoes. On the way these Indians met the owners, some Anauquas, highly indignant about Fawcett's making free with their property.

Then Fawcett headed eastward towards the Kuluene River (another tributary of the Xingu) and vanished.

WHEN NO word came from the intrepid visionary for months, his friends and backers began inquiring after him. In 1927, an engineer, De Courtville, said that he had met a mysterious bearded white man in the jungle, whom he identified with Fawcett. Spiritualist mediums gave out spirit interviews, in which they said that Fawcett was kept captive by Indians who had made a god of him, and other colorful stories.

Finally, a rescue-party was organized in 1928 by a British naval officer, Commander George Miller Dyott, who also had explored in South America.

Dyott, with four young Americans, followed Fawcett's trail to the Anauqua village, overland eastward towards the Kuluene, and down that river. The Indians agreed that Fawcett and his companions had been murdered, but disagreed as to the culprits: the Calapalos blamed the Anauquas, and the Anauquas blamed the Suyas. An Aura Indian accused Aloique, the Anauqua chief—or at least so it seemed through the linguistic barrier, as Dyott had but a few words in common with the Indians, and had to depend largely upon sign-language. Dyott also saw, in Aloique's hut, a suitcase which he took to be Fawcett's, and saw tied around the neck of one of Aloique's children a brass plate bearing the name of the firm of W.S. Silver & Co. of London, which had furnished Fawcett with his equipment.

Dyott concluded that Aloique was the murderer, though his suspicion seems to have been largely motivated by a violent dislike that he took to the chief; and which, in turn, seems—as far as one can judge from his narrative—to be based upon nothing

more than Aloique's wary and reticent manner. Later Aloique agreed for a large bribe to show Dyott the place where Fawcett had been buried, but changed his mind and faded away into the jungle; Dyott's food-supply did not permit him to try to hunt down the spot by himself.

Dyott and his party went on down the Kuluene in boats. The word that there were caraibas who gave presents for the asking had gotten around among the tribes, and when the explorers camped on a sand-bar the entire Camayura nation descended upon them in canoes, all shouting the Indian equivalent of "gimme!" When Dyott's knives and beads gave out, the brown-skinned horde became threatening. To avert a repetition of Fawcett's disaster, Dyott promised a general distribution of gifts next morning, after which, he said, his party would depart up-river. Then when all the Indians were asleep that night, Dyott and his party quietly loaded their boats and took off downstream to safety.

THAT SHOULD have settled the question, but still rumors buzzed out of the Brazilian bush, and still mediums gave out spirit-news of the Fawcett party. Missionaries and travelers reported hearing that the Fawcetts had settled down among this or that tribe and that Fawcett or his son had begotten children on Indian women—infants who, in cheerful defiance of the laws of heredity, were always described as blond and blue-eyed.

Rumors and search-parties continued during the next decade. Nobody found Fawcett, though Koch-Gruenberg's party saw a grave which they were told was Fawcett's. A man who identified himself as Stephan Rattin, a Swiss trapper, showed up at the British consulate in Sao Paolo (pronounced "sowm-*pow*-loo".) with a curiously-inconsistent story of meeting a skin-clad White captive in an Indian village who said he was a British colonel (without giving his name) and entrusted Rattin with an appeal for help. Rattin left the consulate, supposedly on his search, and was seen no more—though whether he, too, perished in the jungle, or whether the episode was a mere money-getting act, I do not know.

Furthermore an Indian inspector picked up a theodolite compass in good condition and gave it to a missionary, who forwarded it to Mrs. Fawcett; some inferred that Fawcett had sent this compass out from his place of durance as a mute plea for rescue. In 1933 the well-known expedition of Fleming and Churchward producted a couple of travel-books, but no Fawcett—having failed to reach his last camp, and having foundered on the common rocks of quarrels and food-shortage.

At last, in 1951, the answer wafted out of the Matto Grosso. A bearded Brazilian Indian agent, Orlando Vilas Boas, after patiently questioning the Calapalos on and off for five years, persuaded them, on a promise of no revenge, to tell the whole story. Fawcett had failed to give them all the presents he had promised and had struck an Indian named Cavicuiri. Therefore the Calapalos had massacred the three Whites with clubs, between the Kuluene and the Rio das Mortes (River of Deaths)—a tributary of the Araguaya farther east. Cavicuiri had ambushed Fawcett while others dispatched the young Britons, who had lagged behind the rest. The young men's bodies they had thrown into a lake; but Fawcett, whom they regarded as chief, they had formally buried with the machete with which he had tried to defend himself. Komatzi, the new Calapalo chief, led Vilas Boas to the grave and had his tribesmen dig up the bones and machete.

Perhaps Fawcett had run into a situation like that which Dyott experienced with the Camayuras and,

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THE MUD PUPPY

Novelet by William C. Bailey

(illustrated by Tom Beecham)

The Mud Puppy should have been ideal for the farmers in Coota Valley, on Vardis. But there was that ever-to-be-damned Part No. 2848...

WHAT HAPPENED to me shouldn't have happened to a dog. Between part No. 2848, and a big fat lug named Cletus Puffer, I spent the lousiest thirty days of my life. Before it was over I lost a hundred bucks; my best customer; and damned near lost my best girl. At one time, the boys were laying three-to-five that I was running a confidence game; but later that day, the odds switched to two-to-one that I was a plain damned fool. I got so sick of water-vapor, rain, and mud, that I dreamt of dying and going to the Sahara Desert. That was the nearest thing to Heaven I could imagine.

It could only have happened in the Coota Valley on Vardis, where a two-piece bathing suit is full dress. That's where the system's sun never shines; where the humidity is always 99 and 44/100; and where the mud is ten meters deep. Yes, and that's where the lax grows five meters tall. The lax is why yokels like George Plunkett, my salesman; Dorcas Rodiska, my best customer; and Cletus Puffer, my worst enemy, live there. Everybody in the Valley is making a pot of dough by wallowing in the mud and growing the damned stuff.

As Cletus Puffer has said, I can't even raise weeds, so I've become a parasite on the body agronomic; I sell swamp-buggies. I have the agency in Toxicoota for the General Electric "Mud Puppy," which is, in my opinion, the best piece of personal transportation and agricultural equipment ever designed for the mud-flats of Vardis. But it's the difference of opinions that makes horse-races, and a hell of a lot of other trouble.

To begin with, it brought me Cletus Puffer. I was standing in my showroom, helping Milgrig Rodiska and George Plunkett admire the brand new '81 Mud Puppy demonstrator, that had arrived on the morning rocket from Vardisport. Just as I peeked out of my show-window to see whether the fog had begun to lift, a swamp-buggy slid to a halt outside; and a big fat specimen, wearing nothing but shorts,



I held up that Part 2848 and tore my hair . . .

vaulted out and landed squashily in the mud.

Before I could stop him, Cletus Puffer had stormed through the moisture-gate and into my showroom. I might ask if you can think of anything more repulsive than Cletus Puffer dry. If you can't I'll tell you: it's Cletus Puffer wet. There he stood, water running down over his fat shoulders, around his expansive paunch, to disappear into the top of his shorts. The trickles reappeared on his thighs and ran down over his chubby knees. My eyes followed their tiny streams down to his ankles. They were clad in sticky black mud that slowly ran off onto the clean tile floor.

"Hello, Cletus," Milgrig sang out. It nauseates you the way these Valley people all know each other and hang together. What she could see in that walrus was beyond me; but I'm not Valley people.

"Cletus Puffer," I hollered. "Stop dripping! What do you suppose the shower and towel are for in that moisture gate? Go out and wash your feet and *dry off!*"

"Hello, Milly!" he boomed out, ignoring me. And I don't like to hear Milgrig called "Milly."

"Russell," he said, turning to me. "You should go back to Earth—either that or get used to the moisture." Then he pretended I wasn't there once again, and advanced on the Mud Puppy, his belly aquiver. For a while, only his

puffing broke the silence as he looked it over, taking in the smooth lines of the tread-covers; the high, flared bow; and the sloping beavertail. Then I could see his eyes rise and take in the completely-transparent turret. George, my yokel of a salesman, slipped me a wink behind Cletus' back.

"How d'ya like her, Cletus?" George finally asked, offering a chew around. Cletus bit off a monstrous chaw and chomped it into a suitable degree of maleability before he replied.

"I would have thought the Mud Puppy people would have had more integrity than that," he said at last, shifting his chaw to the other side.

Milgrig hopped around in front of him, her blonde pageboy bob bouncing pertly on her bare shoulders. "Cletus Puffer," she demanded. "What do you mean by that?"

"Why," he replied, his voice rich with the Valley twang. "More integrity than palming off a brand-new development on the public without working out the bugs in it first. I don't have to look inside the thing to know they've redesigned the power-layout. I bet that buggy is new from snout to tail."

HE WAS RIGHT, and I told him so in no uncertain terms. General Electric had suddenly decided to completely redesign the Puppy for '81, and they did it in ninety days. Cletus was just sore because Fiat had been scooped. I could see that it burned the hell out of him to look at the new tread-covers, to think of a brand-new power set-up. Worst of all, he could see that the sweet going-over that General Electric had given the buggy's lines would make every lax farmer in the Valley a sucker for it.

"That '81 Fiat you're selling is a slightly-altered last-year's model compared to this buggy," I snapped. But Cletus was disappointingly unimpressed.

"Nope," he said, turning away and looking for a spittoon. "You can't do that to lax farmers; they never forget." He gave up, after looking in two corners, and spat expertly under the mudscoops of the Puppy. Patting his paunch like a well-fed man, he continued. "I recall what happened the year Mercedes introduced their microdrive transmission. The lax farmers never forgot the way that thing used to burn out when the going got tough. It's been six years since there's been a single Mercedes in the Valley."

Milgrig didn't let him get away with that. Cletus had sort of maneuvered around her while conducting his hunt for a spittoon, but she stepped right back in front of the meatball. Her trim shape, set off by her white bathing suit, made a pleasing contrast with Cletus' cetacean bulk and bulging maroon trunks.

"What do you know about it, Cletus Puffer?" she said waspishly. "You've never even looked inside." I started to add something, but Milgrig cut me off. "You hush, Russell Dean," she directed. Milgrig occasionally shows a fine flare for executive action. "Cletus Puffer," she told him. "You're just jealous because the Mud Puppy is twice as snappy as that old Fiat of yours, and you know it. I'm going to tell Daddy I want a Mud Puppy, and that he shouldn't believe a word of what you told him last night!"

I should have guessed that Cletus' new Fiat demonstrator for '81 had just come in the day before, and he had gone right to work on old Dorcas. Milgrig had hit him where it hurt.

"Now, Milly," he said, suddenly all concern. "You wouldn't do a thing like that! How'd you like to have this thing break down when your father was fifty kilos out in the middle of his plantation. He could wander around and starve to death, maybe."

Starve to death, on a lax plantation! What an idea. Drown, more likely.

But Milgrig's mind worked straight

and to the point, for once. "How do you know it's going to break down?" she demanded, with female finality.

"I'm so sure of it that I'll bet Russ here a hundred bucks that your Pa never buys a Mud Puppy."

I figured I had the sale in my lap already, so I thought I might as well take a little candy from a baby—especially when the baby was as loathesome as Cletus. "If you'll just make that a bet that you'll sell him a '81 Fiat, Cletus, my would-be walrus, you're on!" We had a bet just that quickly.

"Now, Milgrig," I was smart enough to say. "I don't think it'd be fair for you to let on to your father that we've got this bet going." She started to ask why not, but Cletus decided to make the big gesture.

"Oh, absolutely not," he beamed, probably figuring he'd tell old Dorcas himself. "That wouldn't be fair to either of us; we're competing strictly on the merits of the swamp-buggies." I could see that, too, with old Dorcas trying to marry Milgrig off to that meatball just because he had about three thousand acres of lax in seedlings.

As soon as he had his bet down, and had made a futile attempt to snake Milgrig away with him, Cletus waddled out.

AFTER WHAT Milgrig had said about Cletus' trying to sell her old man a Fiat, I didn't want to waste any time before showing him the new Mud Puppy.

"Hop in, Milgrig," I said. "George and I'll take you out to the plantation."

George went back to open the big gate, and my Honey climbed in and snuggled up beside me, getting in my way a little as she always does. For the first time that day I got a chance to really look at the beautiful simplicity of the Puppy's instrument-board, the functional, unobtrusive design of the interior.

Swamp-buggies are a pretty specialized job for General Electric. With the '81 model I could see they had finally decided that they weren't just tractors gone wrong, but a unique vehicle. A swamp-buggy has to be built to be jackhorsed around by a gang of heavy-handed yokels—half as a means of personal transportation, half as a piece of agricultural equipment. They are always a few inches deep in mud, generally as well coated with the goo as the constant precipitation will permit. Half the time, they are barging across the sluggish rivers or muddy lakes in the flats; the rest of the time, they'll be lugging some lax farmer's thirteen kids and three hired hands into town on a Saturday night. In a manner of speaking, they're amphibious, omnivorous and ubiquitous.

George hollered from the big gate, and I reached for the switch and threw it over to "on." There was a shower of sparks under the dashboard, a nice loud report as a fuse blew, and the switch automatically kicked back to the "off" position. George swung the gate shut and came running over.

Milgrig had let out a little squeal at the sound of the short burning out, but now she was all words. "Why, Cletus was right after all! The very first time you try to take it out... Oh, Russ! You'd think the Mud Puppy people would have more integrity than that!"

What a woman! Quoting Cletus Puffer at me that way.

"Don't be silly, darling," I protested. "Some little thing— I must have done something a little wrong." I started looking around.

"A little wrong? Well, I should say so! Do you think my father's going to pay any attention to details when he drives? He's just going to get in and go! I don't want my Daddy to starve to death out in the middle of a big lax field somewhere!"

Starve to death! I swore a little at that, and that made her cry.

2



BY THE TIME I had gotten her smoothed down, George had swung the dashboard up out of the way. The trouble was easy to locate, even if the layout was unfamiliar. The secondary step-down transformer on top of the forward transmission housing was melted into an unrecognizable blob. Fortunately, the baggage compartment was full of spare parts—including two spare transformers. I will never forget the part number on that damned thing. The label read, *2848—Gen. Elec. Co. Schenectady.*

Milgrig was going to get right out; she wouldn't ride in such a heap, she informed us.

"Now, Milgrig," I protested. "You're getting all worked up over nothing. We'll have this thing fixed in a jiffy; we always have a little trouble with a new model." That wasn't strictly true, I must confess. "We'll have this thing all cleared up by the time I get deliveries and start completing sales."

She looked pretty skeptical, and that dope of a George wouldn't help out a bit by sticking up for my story. He just stood there, mussing up his hair and looking very, very disgusted about the whole thing.

"Listen, Baby," I went on, "I promise you that I won't deliver a single one of these buggies until we have that absolutely licked. But you've got to string along with me. If you let the word get out that the '81 Mud Puppy is a lemon, I won't make a sale, no matter how hard I try. You wouldn't want Cletus Puffer to make me look like a dope, would you, now?"

Milgrig was still a little sniffly. "Well, no... I guess I wouldn't."

"You *guess* you wouldn't? Aren't you sure?"

"Well, I suppose I am. All right; I won't tell anybody. You're sure you can fix it all right?"

I waved her fears aside. "Don't give it a second thought, Honey," I said lightly. "Next week, you'll wonder what you were worked up about." But just the same, I was worried. What was the big idea of the Mud Puppy people sending me something that hadn't been thoroughly tested?

It didn't take us long to cut the damaged transformer out of the circuit and to get the new one installed. It worked perfectly O.K. I began to wonder whether we just hadn't happened to hit that one part in ten thousand that was naturally defective.

We hit the trail for old Dorcas Rodiska's plantation. It was well past noon (and high time we had something to eat); and the fog had lifted some, so that the trip wasn't so bad. Most people think of Vardis as a planet perpetually shrouded in fog of a pea-soup texture. About half the time the "ground layer" effect causes the fog to rise, and leaves a hazy but fairly clear atmosphere below it. Of course, the ceiling of the stuff is never much more than ten metres or so, so that it isn't exactly what you'd call sunshiny. Just the same, because Vardis is a good deal nearer to this system's sun than Elron—a more Earth-like planet—the haze up above is fairly bright, and you get a pretty good illumination.

LUCKILY, Dorcas was not out in a field somewhere, having just finished his dinner. He didn't want Milgrig to come along while he had the demonstration.

"Milly," he said (everybody calls her Milly). "I don't want you acoming along. I'm agonna make up my own mind about this one. Your Mother made me buy the one I've got now,

and I'm dead set on it to make up my own mind on this one!"

Milgrig was pretty cute about it. "Why, Daddy—why should I want to influence you? I'd so like to come along for the ride; I haven't been out to the hybrid fields yet this season." I guessed from that that Cletus, the sly fox, had taken Dorcas out that way so that he could swim across some of the bigger ponds and show the Fiat off to its best advantage.

"Sure, Mr. Rodiska," I said, "let her come along; the Mud Puppy sells herself."

"Mud Puppy!" he snorted. "How did a thing with a name like that ever sell?" But Milgrig got her way. She and George sat in the rear seat in quiet majesty, and Daddy Dorcas and I did the chauffeuring.

Dorcas' hybridizing fields were a good half-hour's ride from the house, well-separated from the crop-fields to keep the strains pure. He sat there at first like a moustachioed Buddha, his fat old tummy wrinkling over the top of his shorts, his muddy bare feet tracking up the inside of the Puppy. For two thousand bucks and the hundred I was going to take Cletus for on the bet, should I worry?

The trail was plain to follow going out, what with the moisture eight or ten metres over us. There was only a slight sprinkle of precipitation from the overhanging cloud to keep the wiper busy.

Dorcas thought our pickup was pretty slick, and he liked the quietness of the enclosed scoops. Best of all, though, was the all-transparent turret.

When we came to the first pond that lay across the trail, the old coot smiled a little under his handle-bar moustache. But did the '81 have zip in water! I'd been holding her down to a safe fifty kilos an hour, and when we dipped down and slid powerfully into the water, I pulled the toggles all the way back, feeding power to the scoops.



We hit the pond like a log coming down a chute, and water geysered up about us in a huge brown and white plume, crashing soupily on top of the turret. Old Dorcas had sort of braced himself for it, expecting to slow down, but with full power going to the scoops, we just fogged through the water. Climbing out on the far side we left a wide smooth furrow behind us where the Puppy's belly supported us, chopped upon each side by the scoops. Even as the visibility closed in on our tracks, the soft mud could be seen flowing back to cover the trace of our passing.

After a look around his alternate-rowed hybridization fields, Dorcas drove her back in. He was a lead-pipe cinch five minutes before we'd gotten back to the house. He dickered a little over the terms on his trade-in, but I knew I had him hooked, so I only gave him nine hundred.

"Congratulations, Mr. Rodiska," I said when he had signed the down-payment check. "You're my first customer for a '81. You'll get the first one I get delivered."

"How long will I have to wait?" he asked suspiciously.

"About a month," I told him, and I knew that Cletus couldn't have promised him any better.

George and I went on from Dorcas' place, and hit several of the nearby lax colonies. We had a crowd of short-clad, dripping farmers slopping around the Puppy everywhere we went. We wound up the day with seven orders, which was the best first day Mud Puppy had had since I took over the agency in Toxicoota.

THE NEXT day, George and I were down with the first ghastly glimmers of dawn to clean the inside of the demonstrator out and get set to lug off to some of the more outlying colonies. He opened the door for me again, and the instant I turned on the switch, we had a nice repeat performance of the previous morning. There were sparks, a nice loud report, and the switch snapped over to "off."

George climbed slowly up to the buggy door and let himself in. His chaw was frozen over in one cheek, like a bad toothache, his sandy hair spilling down his forehead. I just looked at him, deep black hate for Cletus Puffer welling up inside me. And deeper, blacker hate for the Mud Puppy people for saddling me with a lemon.

Farmer George shifted his chaw. "We got one more spare, Russ," he said conversationally. "Shall we put her in?"

"What for?" I demanded.

"Well, we can at least show her today; maybe we can get some more spares from Vardisport by tomorrow."

I had to admit he was practical—but what good would that do? If the damned thing was going to blow out all the time, I might as well not sell any buggies. The farmers wouldn't stand for that; they'd all turn them back in, and I'd be out of business. The only solution was to get the factory working or that part right away, and to get a better transformer into the models that were supposed to be ready for delivery in thirty days.

Gearge swung the dashboard up and we took a look at one more melted transformer, part number *2848—Gen. Elec. Co., Schenectady.* "What's the matter with it?" George wanted to know. He has a sort of divine faith in my diagnosis of what's the matter with anything that doesn't run. He had worked for a few months for Vardis Communications, Inc., when he was younger, but it didn't "take." George couldn't fix a leaky pot.

"Moisture," I ground out. "Water, the curse of this miserable mudhole of a planet. Oh, could I cheerfully slit the throat of the dope who specified that part!" But still, I could understand what a hard time he had. The transformer was up on top of the forward transmission housing, and that meant there had to be flexible leads into it. It's pretty hard to make a thing like that watertight.

"Moisture, eh?" George replied at last, signifying that he didn't know what I was talking about.

"Sure. That transformer heats up. When it cools down, in goes some of the water vapor that makes up 99 and 44/100% of this damned planet's atmosphere. Next time we feed it some power, she's neatly shorted and melts down. What a hell of a note. By the time the factory gets this thing licked, Cletus—the fathead—will have every farmer within reach in hook for a Fiat."

"Maybe the factory can fix it in time," George suggested. He's a hopeful sort of yokel. Still, it was our only out. Both Cletus and I were taking orders on the performance of demonstrators. If I could keep the farmers from finding out, maybe we'd have the bug licked by the time delivery was made. We had a month, anyway.

It didn't do me much good to scream my woes at the General Sales Manager in Vardisport. He finally agreed to send me half a dozen spares by rocket the first thing the next morning, and to call the factory. George and I lasted out that day. We left the switch on from dawn to dusk, and as soon as we put in our last spare, we kept the damned transformer hot.

WE HIT TWO of the outlying colonies, but Cletus had been making his swing through them already, and we only got two orders all day.

And was he spreading the poison around about the "lemon" that Mud Puppy was showing! Those damned lax farmers were so suspicious that you'd think every improvement on the job was just one more way of making sure the cussed thing wouldn't work. One old yokel insisted that nothing that looked that good could ever work worth a damn.

"Stands to reason," he rasped in his corn-fed lingo. "Stands to reason that all them fancy fixings on that there buggy is just to cover up. That's what they're there for, ain't they? Just to cover up? And what's the Mud Puppy got to cover up? Must be pretty bad, I reckon. Stands to reason." That phoney farmer of a Cletus had really been passing the bad word around. He didn't have anything solid to go on, because only George, Milgrig and I knew about the transformer.

It wouldn't have been so bad if George and I had been sure of ourselves; but you just can't sell something you don't believe in, no matter how hard you try. We both knew the Puppy for '81 was a lemon, and that every farmer who signed on the dotted line was taking a good chance of getting a sticking.

And we didn't hear anything from the factory. Vardisport said they beamed Earth each day. At first, General Electric insisted the part was perfectly O.K; after a while they admitted we weren't crazy, but they never reported any improvements. We continued to show the buggy around, running the power-pack down plenty the way we kept the switch on all the time, and leaving it on the charging rack all night to make up for it. We got so we didn't even bother to try the transformer the next day. Wretchedly, furtively, we'd take out the used one after work and put in a brand new part before the first one melted down. As George said, it was a lot less messy that way.

3



IT WAS PRETTY hard stringing Milgrig along. I kept telling her that the factory had the thing licked already, and we expected a shipment of new transformers any day. She did help us out a little, though.

Watching me pull a used transformer one day after giving a couple of demonstrations, she asked, "Why do they burn out, Russ?" I told her about the water vapor that got into them.

"Well, silly," she said. "Why don't you dry them out?"

"Dry them out?" I repeated, with male contempt for female cookbookery.

"Yes. Here, give me one of those and I'll put it in the oven overnight."

She brought it back the next morning, carefully wrapped to keep the moisture out. The damned thing worked. I knew that it was only a stopgap, and that baking the thing wouldn't help much unless you could be sure that the air that went back into it when it cooled down was dry. And that would mean packing it in a box with some hygroscopic powder or something like that. Anyway, it just wasn't a practical solution to suggest that the farmers should take the transformer out every time they cut off the power and bake it for a few hours in an oven.

But it did save eleven dollars every time Milgrig baked one of the things dry, and at the rate I was installing them, it was running into some money.

We were carefully guarding the oven in her father's town house, one night, when I broke the good news to her. She had just tucked a 2848 in on the shelf of the electric cooker and closed the door.

"You're going to make a wonderful cook, dear," I said, wrapping an arm around her slender waist and trying to sneak a kiss.

"And aren't you lucky that I will," she replied, raising her eyebrows. "Russ, you aren't going to be able to bake these things for all the farmers after you make deliveries. You said the factory had it all fixed up; they'd better hurry."

I'd been waiting for her to ask, because Vardisport had phoned that a shipment of a new-model transformer had just come in from Earth, and that I'd have some to try the next day. Milgrig was pretty happy about that.

"See, darling," I told her. "Always have faith in your husband."

"You're not my husband yet," she replied with that peculiarly lethal brand of female logic. There just isn't any answer to a crack like that. Then an idea struck her. "What are we doing drying this one out, then?" she demanded.

I grinned. "Just so we can adjourn to your parlor when we're through here," I said. It seemed we were all through in the kitchen.

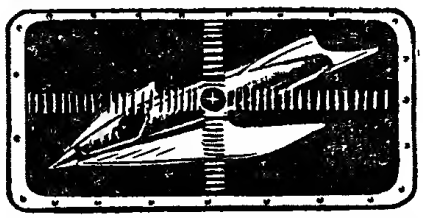
The next day we got the new part, and also a wire that we could expect delivery of our first quota of ten buggies within a week. They had certainly cut it pretty fine. Still, when I thought it over, it was a good trick of the factory folks to be able to whip up a new part so quickly.

We put in the new part 2848 (which was the dead spit of the old part) and gave her a short whirl. Then we let her cool off. And she started right off.

George was happy. "Hot damn, Russ!" he hollered over the clatter of the mud-scoops on the tile as we backed out into the goo. "I sure thought we'd never get the cussed thing fixed!"

I didn't have any trouble making sales that day. It sure makes a difference when you believe in what you're selling.

THAT WAS on Tuesday. That Friday night the late rocket stopped and dropped off one brand new Mud Puppy, the first of my quota, complete with one of the improved transformers. The rest would probably come along Monday. I was so damned anxious to nail my sale with old Dorcas that I drove it right out to the plantation, with George following me in the demonstrator.



The old boy seemed glad to see me. "Hello, Russ," he hollered, the way all these Valley people do, any time a friend gets within visibility.

"Hello there, Mr. Rodiska," I hollered back in my cheeriest imitation of the Valley hail. "Here's your new buggy."

He looked mighty pleased with her, and so did Milgrig. I felt enough like the lad who had made good to slip an arm around her in the old boy's presence. He drooped his moustache and one eyebrow, but he didn't say anything. After we went inside for a cup of coffee, he gave it to me straight.

"You're getting to be quite a success around here, Russ," he told me. "It's high time you went out and claimed yourself a piece of the flat and got your feet solidly planted in mud."

Well, I certainly wasn't going to brush off the first bit of fatherly advise the old boy had ever condescended to give me, especially since I was just about ready to hit him for his daughter's hand.

"Sounds like a good idea, Mr. Rodiska," I replied. "A man can't be too well established, what with the responsibilities he picks up as he gets a little older."

"Hm, yes," Dorcas agreed, drooping the other eyebrow and gnawing at

the handlebar. Maybe he was worrying about the fuss and furor of seeing his last daughter married off.

I was really riding high that day. I was the living proof of all the aphorisms about pride going before falls, about swallows making summers, and so on, but I didn't know it.

The next morning I went down to trundle the demonstrator out, and blooie, the transformer blew out, just as quickly as that. George wasn't there; I was alone with my anguish.

First I screamed, a loud piercing shriek. Then I cursed. Finally I almost blubbered. The whole universe seemed to turn red. My whole world blew apart with that ridiculous transformer. Even the "improved" 2848's were no damned good! Maybe ten or fifteen coolings could be accommodated, then they'd melt down. Was I in a mess.

Vengeance was in my heart. Primeval vindictiveness poured through my veins. I climbed down to the showroom floor and advanced on the visaphone.

"Emmy," I growled when the operator's nosey face appeared on the screen. "I want to place a call to Earth. I want you to get me somebody in the General Electric Company, in Schenectady, New York, who designed part number 2848. Don't stop trying until you get him, do you understand?" She understood. I guess I looked a little grim.

SHE RAISED him in a remarkably short time. He looked about as bad as I did. From what I could see in the screen, he was dressed in a nightshirt, and his hair, what there was left of it, was all snarled up.

"Who are you?" I demanded.

"Who am I?" he replied. "Who the the hell do you want, you imbecile? Do you realize what time it is?"

"I'm calling from Vardis..." I began.

"So they tell me," he said. "The mere fact that you choose to live there should be *prima facie* evidence that you're nuts and that I shouldn't pay any more attention to you."

"Switch off on me, you balding monkey," I screamed, "and I'll chase this beam right into your room and disembowel you!"

That opened his eyes a little, which made me conclude that he was a little sleepy. "I'm looking for the guy who designed the transformer on the '81 Mud Puppy. Are you the lug?"

"I designed it, if that's what you mean," he answered. "And you had better cool down, or I will switch off!"

"I only want to tell you one thing," I said to him in a graveyard tone. "I'm going to haunt you. I'm going to kill myself, and then I'm going to haunt you..."

"Here, here," the engineer said. "This must be costing you a hundred dollars a minute. You'd better get down to brass tacks."

"All right," I snapped. "The damned thing still doesn't work!"

"What!" he cried. "No. No. You must be crazy."

"The hell I am, bud. Three days I used one of the new ones, then blooie!"

I could see him reach up and snatch at his hair. He didn't have enough left to do much of that. "Oh, no," I heard him moan. "Home was never like this!" He seemed ready to discontinue our conversation.

"Hey, wait," I barked at him. "What are you going to do about it?"

"Do about it?" he answered. "I'm going out and get so stinking drunk that nobody will recognize me. Then I'm going to kill myself and haunt my boss!" With that he switched off. Well, I could understand how he felt. It must have been just as hard on him.

Then it hit me like a ton of brick. Dorcas Rodiska's buggy had one of those phoney new 2848's in it! It was a problem how many times he had switched the power on and off in the one day he had been driving it. The solution, or at least the immediate so-

lution came to me at once. Get out there that very night and put in a new one. I'd have to sneak out every couple days until we got a transformer that wouldn't blow out.

So that's what I did. I didn't even tell George. I waited until I was sure all the farmer folk were safely tucked in bed, and then slithered out to Milgrig's father's place. When I got within a few hundred yards, I got out of the buggy and squashed the rest of the way through the mud. I didn't want my spotlight to give me away. That's how I happened to miss seeing Cletus' Fiat parked just ahead of Dorcas' new Mud Puppy.

Nobody locks anything in the Coota Valley, so I got inside without any trouble. It was a rather sad commentary on my life the past month that I was able to do a perfect job of changing part 2848 in the dark. I had gotten the old one cut out and was just getting set to put in the new one when I heard voices. Old Dorcas' grumble was unmistakable in the heavy night air, and so were Cletus Puffer's unforgettable tones. Milgrig's saucy piping was audible in between. I froze solid, knowing perfectly well long before I heard Dorcas' muddy feet climbing up the side that I was going to be caught. It was just fate, that's all.

Sure enough, he climbed up, found the door open, to his surprise, and snapped on the inside light. He could only see my feet sticking out from under the dashboard, but he figured out right away who it was.

"What the hell!" I heard him exclaim. "So. A louse in a pullover!" That meant me. Slowly I wormed my way out from under the dashboard and pulled myself up on the seat, still holding a pliers and dear old 2848.

I might have been able to bluff my way out of it somehow, but my Milgrig, peering in over her father's shoulder, gave the whole show away.

"Russell!" she bleated. "Oh, you horrible cheat! You said you had it all fixed!"

Cletus leaped at that word. "Fixed?" he cried. "Aha!" He sounded just like the villain in some corn-fed melodrama.

"Aha, yourself," I said, that being about all I could think of. It took everybody just about two seconds to get the whole picture straight.

"No, no. Don't bother to get out!" Old Dorcas boomed at me. "It's yours! I wouldn't have such a wreck. And I wouldn't buy one from you if it was the last one on Venus!" He turned around and pushed Cletus and Milgrig into the mud. For a moment I thought I had the satisfaction of hearing Cletus fall on his face in the slippery goo. But then the old boy turned to yell at me some more.

"And if you ever come near my daughter again, you fungus, I'll cut you apart with a lax knife!" I suppose he would have at that.

Figuring that Dorcas might need some transportation in the morning, I put the new part in anyway and took the demonstrator back to town.

4



SEVERAL painless ways to die had passed through my head by the time George showed up in the morning. My story about Dorcas and Milgrig and Cletus' catching me the night before did not surprise him very much.

"Well, it might as well have happened now," George said philosophically. "You couldn't have made the rounds every couple nights. You would have lost too much sleep."

We just sat looking at the floor, with a pile of 2848's stacked up beside us. I was thinking that those figures would make a nice obituary on my tombstone. And then Cletus came down, like the wolf on the fold, his belly aquiver, wrinkle and fold. He

didn't even bother to look for a spittoon, but just let it ride all over the side of the Puppy. Wiping his hands on his belly, slippery-smooth with water-droplets, he came over to where we were sitting.

"Get the hell out of my showroom," I started to tell him. But I was too low to go through with it.

"Gosh, Russ," he said with false friendliness. "I don't know what I'm going to do. It's the best Sunday's business I've ever had." Nobody seemed to care. "Every farmer in the Valley seems to want a new Fiat," he went on. "The news sure gets around fast. I can't say I blame them, though. This '81 Fiat is a sweet baby! Haw, haw, haw!"

That horse-laugh got me. "You get the hell out of my showroom, you salamander!" I screamed at him.

"A pleasure," he told me. "I smell burning insulation, a very nasty odor indeed!" I threw a part 2848 at him, missing a mile, while he beat it through the gate, leaving a spoor of mudtracks behind him.

George was a comfort then. I told him what I thought of the Mud Puppy people back on Earth. I told him I was going to sue somebody for breach of something, and that if I didn't recover, I would journey back home to take it out of somebody's hide, personally. He agreed with everything I said. You could see I was absolutely right, he declared, that nobody like Cletus Puffer, dripping water and mud, deserved one good break in this world, that Cletus certainly was a meatball, an amphibious horror, a misshapen lump of protoplasm too primeval to be called human, and that he was the most unreasonably lucky so-and-so that ever waded knee-deep in goo.

"What one drop of water can do," I said sadly. "One little drop in the wrong place."

"Yes," George said soothingly. "It's almost as bad as it used to be when I worked for Vardis Communications. All the time we had trouble with water. All the time."

"And what could you do about it?" I demanded. "Nothing!"

He shifted his quid. "We tried everything. Every repair crew had a different recipe. It was as bad as how to make mayonnaise without curdling it. Finally they gave up and assembled all equipment on Earth and then welded it inside a container, with just the leads poking out through fused porcelain insulation."

"What a help," I moaned. "You know we can't do that with that transformer. It sits r i g h t on top of the transmission and has to be in a flexible mounting. You'd never keep it water-tight, the porcelain would crack all to hell."

"That's right," said George, going through the ritual of looking for a spittoon before he slid one under the mud-scoops. "That ain't no good. Maybe we should have tried some of the stunts my section boss used to try."

I had a momentary hope. "Did any of them work?"

"Nope," said George. "Nary a one. We sure used some silly ones. I remember some college kid who said we should boil them in parafine, or something like that. Wasn't no use. The stuff melted and ran out when we used the part." He lapsed into silence.

But it was an idea at that. It wouldn't work for part 2848 any better than it had worked for George's section boss twenty years before. What we needed was something... Sure, all we needed was something that wouldn't melt up when the transformer was working, but something that could be melted. Of course, it couldn't be a conductor. I thought of roofing tar. They applied it boiling hot to lax cribs and machinery barns out on the plantations to water-proof them. No, that would melt up, too.

AND THEN I got it. Plastic, plastic was the stuff. That's where it got

its name, because it was thermo-plastic. It must melt, I figured, at some pretty high temperature. I was just desperate enough to try it.

You may think that all I had to do was to go around somewhere and pick up some pieces of plastic. If so, you're crazy. The darned stuff is everywhere, but try to get some loose pieces to melt up. Finally I persuaded George to saw the windshield out of a trade-in.

There was also the little problem of melting the stuff without getting it so hot it scorched and oxidized. What a mess! At last we got a pot of it in a pretty liquid state, and dumped in one of the old 2848's that had been used and allowed to cool. In about two minutes we saw some bubbles rise slowly through the viscid plastic, come to the surface and break with a little "pop", releasing a puff of steam. The water vapor was obligingly cooking out. We let the first one cook for about an hour and then picked it out with a wrench.

I was half-afraid that the temperature of the melting plastic was enough to injure insulation, but the damned thing worked fine. We tried it all that Sunday, turning it on long enough to get hot, then letting it cool off. I was sure it was fixed. Even George decided I wasn't slightly cracked. We stayed up all that night cooking the new ones we had around the place, so that there would surely be enough of them when the rocket brought the rest of my quota in the morning.

The other nine buggies did arrive, and by the time George and I had shuttled back and forth and brought them to the showroom, quite a few of the farmers had showed up, demanding their money back and trying to cancel their contracts. It took some darned fast talking, requiring that I call Cletus Puffer four kinds of a liar, and Dorcas Rodiska his helper, but I finally persuaded the yokels to drive away with the buggies, all fixed up with the cooked transformers. Of



course, I also had to promise to reimburse them completely if the damned things didn't work.

When the last of the buggies had slithered away into the gloom George swung his big gate shut and came in, wiping the moisture from his face. "T h e r e they go," he said, not too cheerfully. "At least you didn't lose your shirt."

I knew what he meant. "Yeah," I said. "Old Dorcas will never forgive me. He knows damned well I took a long chance and won. He'll never let me get within a thousand metres of that good-looking daughter of his."

"Too bad," George commiserated. "Milly is a mighty nice girl." He walked out slowly and left me alone, alone with my thoughts of Milgrig. It was just as though she had come in answer to them. I looked up from my abstraction, and there she was, only Cletus Puffer and Dorcas Rodiska were along with her, and they all looked mad as hops.

CLETUS pushed his belly-button right up to my face, an easy thing to do, because I was sitting down and his paunch precedes the rest of him considerably.

"Russell Dean," he proclaimed for the small audience. "You are a louse, a louse's louse! As President of the Better Business Bureau, I shall personally see to it that you are blacklisted in the Valley!"

"Absolutely!" Dorcas backed him up, sashaying his handlebar furiously. I could see how his fingers itched to be around the handle of a lax knife.

"Positively!" Milgrig cried, but I

could hear tears in her voice and see them brimming in her eyes.

"I think I'll just stick around to make damned sure you don't try to skip town," was Cletus' final insult.

"Come, come," I said with all the eclat I could muster. "You're in a stew about nothing. I've got the bugs out of that transformer. Every new buggy that's left the place has had one of the new parts in it. Relax, boys."

"That's a lie!" Cletus hooted, quivering all over. "A lie, I tell you! That transformer of yours won't last a week!"

I patted his abdomen. "Don't give it a second thought, Cletus, old grampus," I chuckled. "You didn't think Mud Puppy would put out something it wouldn't stand behind, did you?"

But old Dorcas was a suspicious guy. "I think you're lying, Russ," he said slowly. "Just what were you doing in my buggy Saturday night?"

"Yes!" Milgrig chimed in, trying to stamp her feet. It isn't very effective when you don't have any shoes on.

"Oh, that," I did some quick thinking. "Why, uh, I was just making sure that your buggy was equipped with the improved part, that's all." Did I watch that old Dorcas! His moustache curved up. Then it curved up again. Then it went into a slow wig-wag. Finally he turned to Cletus, who was puffing furiously at the way things had broken.

"And I let you talk me into buying a lousey Fiat!" Dorcas said with bucolic wrath.

"You're a damned sight better off!" Cletus declared angrily. That wasn't the right approach.

"Don't you tell me when I'm better off!" Dorcas snapped. "I don't need any help from you to run my life, you soft-soap artist!"

"That's right, Cletus Puffer!" Milgrig piped up, taking the paternal cue. "You just slickered Daddy into buying your rotten old buggy with your lies!"

Cletus swelled like a toad. "So now I'm a liar?" he bleated.

"You're darned tootin'," Dorcas fired back. "And you'd better get out of my sight before I take a lax knife to you!" A mighty handy man with a lax knife, that Dorcas.

Pleasing talk, that. Not very long ago he'd been willing to take a lax knife to *me*. Ah, well, the right will prevail.

BUT CLETUS couldn't bring himself to make an exit with his tail between his legs. With a supersneer, what I can only call a Cletus-sneer, he turned back to me.

"I can't say it was such a bad deal, everything considered," he said smugly. "Russ, I'll trouble you for one hundred dollars you amiable curr."

"Don't pay him!" Dorcas snapped, knowing nothing about it.

"I'll have to," I replied. "He won it fair and square when you bought a Fiat instead of a Mud Puppy."

Milgrig joined the fray again. "Cletus, you cheat!" she scourged him.

But Cletus' hide was as thick as it was blubbery. "One hundred, please," he said, in a tone somewhat like Shylock's in the fourth act.

Because I'd gotten payments from a couple of the farmers that morning. I had it in my pocket, and I counted it out for the big ape.

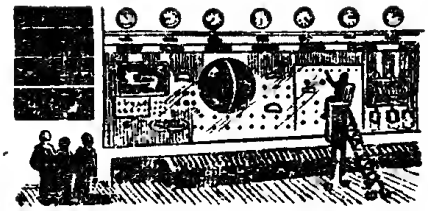
Dorcas watched me in silence, looking as though it hurt him as much as it did me. I like that in a man. "One hundred dollars," he said reflectively, as Cletus tucked it into his wallet. "Well, it's a cheap price to have you as a son-in-law, at that. I think my wedding present will balance the books."

Milgrig made a little squeaking sound and almost flew into my arms, her drying tears shining on her cheeks.

Yes, I thought as I gave her a big hug, a cheap price indeed.

"You can go now, Cletus, old walrus," I said sweetly.

★



THE MELTING POT

A Discussion of the Science-Fiction Fan Press

by Calvin Thomas Beck

MANY OF you have wondered just what is the ingredient that makes a difference between a mere "reader" and a "fan"? Most of those who have ever attempted coming up with an answer have been stumped with dead-ends. Yet I believe that the closest definition would be: *fan-magazines,* also colloquially termed by enthusiasts as "fanzines", "fanmags", "letterzines"—and the end of terminologies is yet hardly within sight. Also equally important (if not more so to many) are the *fan clubs,* part of which keep mostly active through the mail as correspondence and pen-pal groups, the rest usually devoted only to local functions. A large number of our centrally-important cities—and surprisingly, quite a few villages and small towns—have at least one organization of this type. A metropolitan area like San Diego, New York, or Los Angeles has as many as two, four or five and more operating simultaneously. To name a few other areas; there is at least one science-fiction club now working in San Francisco, Minneapolis, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Baltimore, Cleveland, St. Petersburg, and Chicago.

Outside of local clubs which one might join up and belong, there is no other means of communication that has left its mark more strongly and ineradicably in fandom than the fan magazines. The entire number of these amateur journals has fluctuated too much for an accurate tabulation, but suffice it to be said that a new or old one is being printed for nearly every day of the year. Through the media of amateur science-fantasy journalism, enthusiasts have been able to keep all bonds of mutual interest well-centered and coordinated; it is doubtful if the enthusiasm, spirit and the vociferousness displayed by "fandom" could be half duplicated by any other similar pursuits.

Unfortunately many a stranger has often felt that a certain qualification, or a formal invitation, or ticket, is required before an "outsider" can be admitted into the ranks of fandom; this is as far from the truth as anything could be. The only "ticket" or invitation that's needed is some stationery and a pile of postage stamps —fandom is as far away as the corner mail box. A few subscriptions to the fan-magazines, of which some are reviewed here, is considered one of the best starts. Basically an *active,* or generally interested, fan is the type of person who merely likes to discuss and criticise science-fantasy fiction in

a simple, home-spun manner with other people like him through the mail, or in a club.

The *fan field* has often been a source of training for the beginning writer, and for the amateur who aspires to be a professional some day.

A sizeable number of people who are now well-known in science-fiction came up through the fan clubs, or the fan press, or the many letter-departments in the magazines (in many instances, they were known in all three sources). Editors Ray Palmer, William Hamling, Larry Shaw, Lester del Rey, and Robert W. Lowndes; authors Ray Bradbury, James Blish, Walt Miller, Henry Kuttner, and Damon Knight; authors' agents Frederik Pohl and Forrest J. Ackerman; artists Hannes Bok and John Giunta—these are but a few.

If you are interested in learning what is this thing known as "fandom", a good start can be made by dropping a line to several of the fan magazines listed in the rest of this department. But, mind you: you're not going to get anything that resembles *Esquire, Look,* or *Bluebook* in format. Some of these publications are photo-offset; some are printed; a few hectographed; and the majority are mimeographed. However, it is doubtful if most of the commercial publishers could half-surpass the average fan-publisher for sheer enthusiasm and genuine sincerity.

The fan-mags making a profit are the great exceptions. They are published for the fun of it, as a service and accomodation to other fans, and because the fan-editors and contributors get a big kick seeing their names in print—the sort of incentive that's kept the literary world going since the beginning.

Although many fan-editors might send you sample copies of their publications without any charge, it is best to send postage along, to make sure of getting your sample. But do not address your letter in care of the name of the publication; none of these are commercial ventures, and it is seldom that any listing or classification of the publication is kept by a local post office. Just address your letter to whomever is issuing the magazine.

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FANTASY-TIMES—*James Taurasi, editor; 137-03 32nd Ave., Flushing 54, L.I., N.Y. 10c per copy; 12 for $1.00. Twice monthly.* Now in its twelfth year of publication, Taurasi's Journal is still the science-fiction field's Number One "newspaper", offering news, views and interviews from both the pro' and fan side.

FANTASY-COMICS— *(same address as above)—5c a copy, or 6 issues for 25c. Published monthly.* A newssheet of exactly what the name implies. Devoted exclusively to the S-F-horror comic field.

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THE FANTASY CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM *compiled and written by Alastair Cameron. Available from Chester D. Cuthbert, 54 Ellesmere Ave., St. Vital, Manitoba, Canada. Limited to 500 numbered copies at $1.00 each.*

A professionally-assembled job; I am inclined to believe that it should be of value and assistance to the person interested in creative writing, or for any young writer and newcomer to the field. Aside of that, it's also a splendid aid for the serious collector and bibliophile. To quote Mr. Cuthbert:

"It represents the first detailed attempt to analyse and classify the basic ideas upon which the entire field of fantasy and science fiction is built. Incidentally, it is an excellent source of plot ideas and combinations, and therefore a reliable handbook for authors."

There isn't any more that I could add to that, except it is a most neat and expert job.

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THE CHECKLIST OF FANTASTIC MAGAZINES—*Bradford Day, 127-01 116th Ave., S. Ozone Park 20, L. I., N. Y. $1.00 a copy...in limited edition.*

One of the better approaches towards providing a science-fantasy magazine checklist-guide. Giving the dates, numbers and the titles of periodicals, "The Checklist" covers just nearly all the magazines that have been produced in the last nearly sixty years. It includes also such hard-to-look-up titles like *Black Cat, Ghost Stories, Horror Stories, and Oriental Stories,* just to name a few. Of interest to buyers, collectors, and editors.

●

APPROACH TO INFINITY, *by Morris Scott Dollens. Available from Roy Squires, 1745 Kenneth Road, Glendale 1, Calif. Printed in a limited edition at 30c per copy.*

An attractive folio of original Fantasy artwork, by one of the most talented artists that can be found today in the amateur limelight, Morris Scott Dollens. Dollens has, for years, been familiar to us for his striking covers and artwork, as one of the leading photo-montage artists on some of the best known fan-mags, but mostly for his many outstanding contributions to *Science-Fiction Advertiser.*

If you're looking for something entirely different and original in Science Fantasy artwork, I'd suggest this as an excellent gift for your friends. *Highly recommended!*

●

CONFUSION—*Shelby Vick, Box 493, Lynn Haven, Fla. 10c per issue. 12 for $1.00. Published monthly, sometimes oftener.*

A riotous and semi-serious fan and fun-mag all in one. Even its editor lays a partial claim of being related to Pogo and Cloe. Each different issue can offer anywhere from 45 to 90 or more pages, and always be as unpredictable and entertaining as possible. Issue number 13 in my hands includes the first in a series on "The History of S-F Mags", contributions by Lee Hoffman, Walt Willis, Bea Mahaffey and many others. Included also is a rollicking letter-section; some poetry; two and three-color illustrations; and a flying saucer on the cover. Format and mimeographing are consistently of a high quality.

●

COSMAG/SCIENCE FICTION DIGEST (*combined*)—*By Burwell and Macauley, 57 E. Park Lane N. E., Atlanta 5, Georgia. 25c a copy, 6 for $1.25. Issued bi-monthly.*

The Sept., 1952, issue received is a "specialty" and costs 50c if any copies are still available. This issue consists of some 64 compact and neatly arranged professionally printed pages. A partial look at the long table of contents shows an original yarn by Mack Reynolds, and top-notch material by the ubiquitous Walt Willis, Arthur C. Clarke, Bob Tucker, Fred Shroyer, Dick Clarkson, Darrell C. Richardson and many others. Unfortunately this is another of the better fan-journals which, because of poor support, has to go into mimeographed form "after the first of the year". Editor Macauley asked me to advise anyone wishing to subscribe that *Atlanta S-F Organ* will be the new name from now on, though back copies of the older title may still be on hand.

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SCIENCE-FICTION ADVERTISER (Formerly Fantasy Advertiser), Roy Squires, 1745 Kenneth Road, Glendale 1, Calif. 20c a sample copy; 8 for $1.00

[*Turn To Page* 116]

TIME GOES TO NOW

(illustrated by Milton Luros)

Anything in that junk-pile could be used for building the aquarium in his basement, Henry Quiby thought. Even those two objects resembling metal diving-suits. But henpecked Henry never suspected how he'd use one of those suits . . .

By CHARLES DYE



JOE HOOLAGAN stood picking his teeth underneath the big, sloppy sign proclaiming: JOE'S JUNK YARD *The Best Junk In Town.*

Contemptuously, he watched Henry Quigby, lunchpail in hand, shamble stoop-shouldered into the yard. "Whatcha say, professor?" Joe said, flicking away his toothpick.

"Good morning, er—Joe," said Quigby shyly. He wasn't really a professor. Because of economic difficulties—he told himself—he had never become anything more than a high-school teacher in history. It secretly irritated him every time Joe sarcastically called him "professor"; but he was afraid to say something, for fear of raising Joe's temper.

"Gotta load of stuff in yesterday from that boiler factory. Wanna take a look?"

"By all means," Quigby said, following Joe into the rear of the yard. He was led down a narrow pathway that wound in and out between mountainous piles of wrecked autos, a few planes, old bathtubs, sinks, rusty plumbing, and practically anything nameable that was porcelain or metal—and broken. They finally came out into a vacant space where all new acquisitions were dumped for classification before being stacked back in the yard.

"Over there," said Joe pointing.

Yes, thought Quigby, walking over to the pile of iron-plate, dismantled boiler parts, and pipe, *this would be just the thing!* He also noticed two objects resembling metal diving suits sticking out of the pile, but he didn't say anything; Joe might not know they were there. He would be able to use almost everything in the pile for that basement aquarium he was going to build. Of course, Harriet didn't know he was going to build it. But then, hadn't she said he could do anything with his half of his uncle's inheritance money?

"I'll take it—the whole pile!" said Quigby enthusiastically. "Uh—how much?"

"Well, let's see," Joe said, pretending he didn't already know how much he was going to stick old Quigby. "It'll take me and the boys a couple of hours to get this stuff loaded back on the truck and over to your place. Then we gotta unload it. Then there's all the time it took hauling it in from that boiler dump." Joe looked sharply at Quigby. "Seventy-five bucks."

"All right," Quigby said, drawing out his check book.

"We'll have it over to your place before noon," Joe said, feeling awfully superior, now that he'd gotten away with gypping Quigby once more.

"Fine," Quigby said. "On second thought, er—ah, could you make it this afternoon and put the stuff in the basement?" Harriet would be out then, attending one of her endless club meetings. It was better she didn't see his latest acquisition; she would only start hollering about how foolish and silly he was, wasting his money on plain junk.

"Sure boss," Joe said sarcastically, pulling out an old cigar butt from his shirt pocket and lighting it.

●

Late that afternoon, Henry Quigby, clutching his lunch pail and a book on marine life by Beebe, trudged wearily up his front-porch steps.

Today had gone worse than usual. He'd been late to his first class; somebody had emptied his thermos of tea and substituted brandy. During the afternoon—possibly because it was Friday—his students had been more unruly that ever—spit wads and rubber bands plopping and z i n g i n g around the room like gunfire. By the time the dismissal bell rang, all he could do was lean against his desk and gasp.

Henry had no sooner set foot inside his house, than a loud feminine voice yelled, "Henry Quigby—come in here!"

The devil! thought Henry, crossing into the bedroom. *Hadn't Harriet gone to her club meeting after all?*

"Yes, dear," he said meekly.

"Mrs. Sykes phoned this noon to say the league meeting was canceled; and I came down with a splitting headache arguing with that horrible woman over whether or not, just because she's chairman, *she* has the right to cancel a meeting anytime *she*

feels like it. Then those wretched junk men came clattering and stomping into the basement—"

"I'm sorry they disturbed you, dear."

"—with seventy-five dollars worth of junk they said *you* bought!"

"But Harriet, with that seventy-five dollars worth of junk, I can build that aquarium I've been talking about all these years for half the price it would cost otherwise. I'm going to—"

"Well, you can't build it now. Starting tomorrow, the City Sewing Circle will be meeting three times weekly in the basement. We certainly don't want any smelly aquarium cluttering up the place."

"But Harriet!"

"No buts; get that stuff out of there. Pile it against the garage or someplace. Now you've made my head worse! I won't be able to get supper—besides, I don't want any."

Without a word, Henry turned and walked out of the house. Still clutching his Beebe and lunch-pail, he trudged down the steps into the basement. Flicking the light switch, he gazed sadly at his junk. The two diving-suits, or whatever they were, gleamed dully on top of the pile.

FOR A LONG time he stood there—despising himself, and trying to understand why he was the way he was. Why couldn't he be dictatorial like Harriet? People always seemed respectful of wilful, selfish individuals—goodness knows *he* was always being respectful enough. If he only had the courage to stomp upstairs and, for once in his life, shake his fist in Harriet's face and tell her this was *his* house and *his* basement. He would do whatever he liked with it, and she and her damned sewing circle of gossipy women could go out in the vacant lot!

Suddenly he remembered his lunch thermos, still full of brandy. That was it; he'd get drunk! So what if it *did* only give him false courage? He would still do what he'd always wanted to do: tell her that from now on he was doing all the dictating, and it would stay that way, and if she didn't like it—well, she could always go back to her mother!

Opening his lunch pail, and unscrewing the thermos cap, Henry took a long swig. The taste of the stuff nauseated him, but after several more swallows, he forgot all about the taste. He began to feel quick and sharp, like a razor. Then, his dancing eyes lit upon the diving-suits half-buried in the pile of junk. Wouldn't it be fun to get inside one of those and go tip-toeing upstairs into Harriet's bedroom—and scare her! Yes, like she made him jump every morning by yelling into his ear to get out of bed.

Suppressing a chuckle, Henry dragged the two suits out of the pile. One, he plainly saw, was damaged—the legs and transparent head-piece smashed. The other, with the exception of a few dents and scratches, seemed to be undamaged. Then Henry noticed neither suit had arms. Odd, he thought, but he shrugged it off with another shot of brandy from the thermos.

First, before getting into the suit, he'd have to prop open the back-porch screen. Removing his shoes, he quietly tip-toed up, propping it open at the bottom with a three-foot stick of wood. This should allow him enough room to step through once he was inside the suit. Going back to the basement, he replaced his shoes, and pulled out some old cotton waste from the rag box to muffle the metal soles of the diving suit.

When that task was completed, and he'd had another swig of brandy, he was all set to don the suit. Then he began realizing its strangeness of design. It was all one piece, from the transparent head-dome to the now-padded metal foot-soles. He noticed a small, pinkish button on the left side of the breast-plate. He pressed it; the front portion of the suit clicked open. On the inside of the breast-plate was a

small control panel. In its center was a calibrated dial of some sort or other —probably to register the depth of the dive, thought Henry. To the left was a small lever protruding four or five inches. To the right, a large, red button. Clamped to the panel, beneath the dial, was a strange-looking gadget or weapon, resembling a Buck Rogers pistol. The rest of the suit was padded with what looked like sponge-rubber.

Chuckling and hiccupping simultaneously, Henry tried to imagine the look of fright on Harriet's face when he lunged into her room. Standing the suit up against the wall, he backed into the rear half; then, grasping the bottom of the control panel, he slammed the front portion shut.

Suddenly his head began to reel and a slight wave of nausea passed over him. He vaguely realized he'd better get his little joke over with, before he was unable to stand up.

Going slowly and carefully, he made it up the basement stairs without too much difficulty. This gave him confidence—too much confidence. When he started climbing the back-porch stairs, he went too fast and tripped over the third step. Feeling himself falling forward, he instinctively raised his hands inside the suit to protect his face. As he did so, his left hand caught and flicked the small lever on the left side of the control panel—

●

THE NEXT thing Henry Quigby knew, he was thousands of feet up in the night sky. Except for his reeling head, he suddenly felt cold sober. His thoughts churned round and round, frantically trying to rationalize his unbelievable predicament.

The cold stars, all around him, glittered mockingly.

He noticed a faint hum and warmth at his back. Twisting his head inside the head-piece, he saw wisps of blue flame or light emanating from an almost invisible nozzle at the back of the suit.

Good Lord, he thought, *this isn't a diving suit after all, but some sort of flying suit!* How high was he? He couldn't make heads or tails of the dial, which was calibrated in strange geometric symbols. The needle was pointing straight up, in the same position he'd noticed it back in the basement.

Glancing down toward earth, Henry suddenly grew panicky. What if he was stuck up here? He would maybe slowly freeze or suffocate!

Again, and again, he frantically flicked the lever protruding from the panel. Nothing happened. Noticing the dial had no covering, he moved the needle backwards, then forwards, then backwards. Again nothing happened. The large, red button was his last resort.

He pushed the button.

This time something happened! He lost consciousness . . .

●

Some sharp object sticking up into his chest was his first rude awakening into awareness. With a groan, he managed to roll over on his back. As he did so, there was a sharp click; he realized he'd been lying chest-down on the control board lever. What control board lever?

It was only then that he became fully conscious of his surroundings. He was still inside this damned diving-suit. Glancing up through the transparent head-piece, he saw that it was still night.

His head! Somebody seemed to be trying to crack it with a sledgehammer! And his mouth tasted as though somebody else had slept in it all night. He closed his eyes, keeping them tightly shut. What had happened?

Oh yes, he'd gotten drunk—but no, it had started before that . . . at Joe's junk yard. He'd bought that pile of boiler factory stuff containing the two diving suits. Then Harriet had forbidden him to build the aquarium—

It all came back to him! Lord, what an ass he'd made of himself—getting drunk, putting on this suit to scare Harriet. He must have fallen down the back-porch steps and, while unconscious, dreamed he'd been shot up into the sky. While here he'd been all the time—lying in his own backyard!

OPENING his eyes, Henry glanced at the faintly glowing dial of his wrist-watch. It was after midnight; he'd better get out of this suit and cart the rest of the junk out of the basement before Harriet caused anymore unpleasantness. Searching, he found the inside half of the button he'd pushed to open the suit. He pressed it, and the front half of the suit flew open. Tottering, he stood up—

To face a snarling, fiery-eyed monster, crouching hardly ten feet away! For several deadly seconds, Henry stared hypnotized at the frightful thing outlined against the stars. Then suddenly, his shock turned to fright! Turning to flee, he slipped, falling across the control panel of the open suit. He heard another snarl, and out of the corner of his eye saw the beast getting ready to pounce!

Now he was done for! Then his hand came in contact with the gun-like object clamped to the control panel. Frantically he jerked it loose and pointed it at the monster, squeezing the trigger.

Nothing happened! The thing would spring any minute! Again and again he squeezed the trigger. Not a sound. The gun was either broken or out of ammunition. Cringing, Henry waited for the spring—

But it didn't come, nor was there a sound from the beast. Henry looked at the gun still clasped in his shaking hand. Did it have some sort of silencer, or did it work on a completely new principle?

Screwing up his courage, he cautiously stood up and walked over to the crouching monster. There seemed to be no sign of life left in it. Clutching the gun tightly, he gave the beast a nudge with his foot. It toppled over, still in its crouching position, and lay on its side. Henry again looked at the gun! It must kill by somehow paralyzing its victim. Bending over to get a better look at his kill, he was startled to find it was a huge striped tiger! What was a tiger doing in his backyard? There weren't any circuses in town that he knew of.

Then, for the first time since all the excitement, Henry looked around for his backyard.

It wasn't there.

Nothing was there. His house, his garden, his garage, other neighboring houses. He was in a grassy clearing, surrounded on three sides by towering jungle. Straight ahead, he caught the faint glimmer of water.

Was he still drunk? Was he having a nightmare? Was—was he insane?

Wildly, Henry glanced down at the tiger lying at his feet. Kneeling, he touched the beast with his hands. It was solid enough. Then he noticed its jaws and fangs—it was a saber-tooth! Henry was thunderstruck; they were supposed to have existed only in prehistoric times.

All of this was too much for Henry —plus the unexplainable, the horrible fear of the unknown. Sobbing hysterically and tightly clutching the gun, he ran stumbling down the clearing towards the glimmer of water. His throat became a burning hole, as he plowed through marshy soil surrounding the body of water.

THEN, WITH a hideous sucking and snorting noise, a gargantuous nightmare-shape loomed up directly in front of him! An overpowering stench of rotting garbage momentarily brought Henry to his senses. Bringing up the gun and squeezing the trigger, he turned, fleeing towards the inky blot of jungle—not daring to glance back at the horror which had almost gobbled him up!

The marsh sucked and clung to his feet like solidifying molasses. Surely

this must be a nightmare; for as in a nightmare, the faster he tried to run the slower he seemed to go!

Finally, he reached solid ground. Staggering across this, he noticed one of his shoes was missing. For a moment he hesitated, deciding whether to look for it; that moment almost cost him his life!

A long, black, almost invisible, reptilian creature darted out from behind a clump of bushes and streaked straight for Henry's legs.

This is the end! thought Henry, shutting his eyes. As he did so, a sudden spell of dizziness overcame him, causing his shoeless foot to skid from under him. The slip saved him; hissing, the reptile went shooting between his spread-eagled legs so fast that its momentum carried it yards into the blackness beyond.

Now sprawled on the ground, Henry pointed his gun in the direction of the fast returning hissing. Holding back the trigger, he sprayed the whole area into which the snake, or whatever it was, had disappeared.

After several minutes of this, Henry got to his feet and stumbled the remaining distance to the jungle edge: suddenly not caring whether his peculiar pistol had killed the snake or not.

With utter exhaustion upon him, and no energy left to generate fear, calmness and reason slowly returned. He realized he'd better muster up one last ounce of strength and climb one of the giant fern-trees for the night, before any more harm had a chance to befall him.

His muscles felt as stiff and as brittle as matchsticks, as, hand over hand, he went up the nearest and tallest tree. Remembering how he'd once seen Tarzan do it in a movie, he made fairly good progress in spite of his exhaustion. Once or twice, he was almost trapped as an arm or leg became caught in the mesh-like foliage of ropey vines.

Finally, when he thought he'd climbed high enough to be out of danger, he tied the stoutest vine he could find around his chest—in case he fell off the yard-wide limb while asleep.

After making himself as comfortable as he could, and making sure his weapon was safely tucked away, he wearily closed his eyes and listened to the weird night-noises of this other planet or prehistoric world he'd been thrust into. He was too tired to ponder over how he'd gotten here, or how he was going to get out. But before he dropped into dreamless sleep, he was certain of one thing: the adventures of the past few hours had somehow changed him. He'd run up against situations far more deadly than anything his own world had ever offered him—and he'd managed to solve them, one way or another. Something he'd never quite done in his world.

He didn't blame the kids at school for being contemptuous of him—or, for that matter, Harriet. What had there been likable about him? Never standing up or fighting for his convictions, letting Harriet push and brow-beat him. Why should anyone have respected him? Somehow he'd get out of this fantastic mess—if he didn't die trying—and go back and show them all what sort of a person he could and would be! Harriet and the others weren't really unlikable people; he'd just allowed them to take advantage of his weaknesses. Well, if he got out of this, he certainly wouldn't be weak any more!

For the first time in his life, Henry Quigby felt like a man. Then, clouds of sleepy exhaustion slowly darkened his consciousness.

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A HOT, STEAMY dawn brought the nightmarish world suddenly and violently to life! Strange cries and blood-curdling howls blended discordantly with the buzzing chatter of giant insects. Henry awoke with such a start that for a moment he felt a sickening sense of displacement; then, the pieces of his consciousness began dropping into place. And the reality of his pre-

dicament became vividly clear in the dirty, gray light of the prehistoric dawn. He *must* be either in prehistoric times, or in some corner of the world forgotten by time; otherwise, how account for the saber-tooth tiger? He doubted if the environment of another planet could produce such an exact replica of a saber-tooth.

Untying the vine from around his chest, he stood up on his perch and attempted to survey the terrain. Directly in front of him, covered by fog, was the grassy clearing of last night's adventures. To the left was the marsh, completely hidden in steamy vapors and snakey streamers of mist. On all sides of the clearing, riotous jungle towered hundreds of feet into the star-flecked dawn sky.

He looked up at the pale stars and some of his loneliness vanished as he recognized the Pole Star and the Big Dipper. Suddenly, things didn't seem so hopeless after all. There must be some way out? There had certainly been a way in, and as soon as he'd fully figured that out—

Pangs of thirst and hunger brought him back to the immediate problems of the present. He decided to wait until it was fully light before attempting to do anything about his stomach. In the meantime, he would relax on his perch and try to figure a few things out.

It all seemed to have started with that pile of junk containing what he thought were diving suits. Where did Joe say the stuff had come from? The boiler factory, that was it. And hadn't something happened there? Then he remembered all the details. A mysterious missile one night had smashed into the factory, demolishing it completely. The newspapers had made a big to-do, claiming it was everything from the Russians to crackpot inventors. Army men had investigated the wreckage, later hauling away some of the debris. Nothing had been said about what they'd found—if anything.

But where could the diving suits, or flying suits, or whatever they were, have come from? What would a boiler factory be doing making suits such as the one he'd landed here in? The thought of the mysterious missile reminded him of a book he'd once read titled *LO!* by somebody named Fort. As he recalled, Fort had suggested that many of the unexplained disappearances, explosions, and accidents might be caused directly or indirectly by some outside superior force man wasn't even aware of. Suppose the missile that had hit the boiler factory had come from some outside source—the Martians, perhaps?

Somehow, in the light of his present situation, the idea didn't sound too fantastic. They could have been carrying the suits he'd gotten hold of when they met with the accident. Henry by now realized that the suits—at least the one he'd come here in—were devices for some sort of time-travel. But why had the suit shot him up into the sky? Unless this was to prevent the traveler from materializing in the middle of an unforeseen mountain or building at the end of his journey. Then, of course, once the trip was completed high in the air, the traveler was automatically lowered to the ground.

Henry's heart began to beat faster. Barring accidents, it was possible that getting out of here would be just as easy as his unintentional arrival.

THE SUN suddenly blazed into view like a giant red eye, causing the jungle, as far as Henry could see, to resemble shimmering green fire. The fog covering the clearing was disintegrating into puffy clots, which slowly evaporated into the furnace-like heat of the day.

Henry began feeling apprehensive about the time suit. It had been weak and foolish of him to become hysterical and run off, leaving the suit open all night unprotected. Suppose something had happened to it? Then there would be no getting back—ever! It would all be so simple if he could

just saunter over when the fog lifted, climb inside, flick the ascent lever, set the dial needle to where it was before he started experimenting, and push the red button—

In spite of the breaking fog, Henry still couldn't see the suit. He decided to climb down from his roost and locate it as soon as possible.

Getting down from the giant fern-tree proved harder than climbing it had. As he neared the bottom, he increasingly became entangled in the snake-like vines and creepers weaving in and out of the tree like a spider's web. Finally, fifteen feet from the ground, he spotted a hole in the net-like foliage and jumped the remaining distance.

He had no sooner gotten to his feet, than a terrific commotion from across the clearing attracted his attention.

Through the wisps and clots of remaining fog, he could make out fifteen or twenty hairy baboon-creatures attacking two other similar beings, easily distinguishable from the rest, by their hairlessness and paleness of color.

Suddenly, one of the pale, hairless beasts picked up a huge club from the clearing's edge and swung it menacingly above his head, howling frightfully at his tormentors. In spite of the wicked looking weapon, the attackers continued to advance on the club-wielder and what appeared to be his mate. Several times, the club connected savagely with one or more shaggy skulls, splitting them open like ripe mellons.

By the time the last streamer of fog had disappeared, the two had been forced out almost to the center of the clearing. Superior numbers having proved too much for them.

It was then that Henry spotted the glint of the time-suit lying directly in the path of the advancing baboons. Another ten yards and they would be trampling over it.

With a yell, Henry dashed out into the clearing, reaching for the pistol-paralyzer as he did so. Horrors—he couldn't find it; it must have dropped out of his shirt while he climbed down from the tree. He didn't have time to go back now!

Henry began to sweat! His yell had scared the baboon-creatures, and they were now running for the jungle—all except the club-swinger, who, with club upraised, was racing straight for him!

ACTING fast, he picked up the nearest object he saw—a jagged rock—and flung it with all his strength, into the baboon's face! With a sickening crunch, the rock glanced off the beast's head and went spinning into the grass. As it collapsed in a heap, its mate—witnessing the death, and limping from some earlier injury—went whimpering off into the jungle.

Henry stared down at the thing which had fallen almost at his feet. Except for its paleness, and lack of hair or fur, it vaguely resembled a baboon he'd once seen as a kid at a circus. Also, there was a touch of something else about it that reminded him of some other animal.

As the sun rose higher, the shiny reflection of the time suit caught the corner of his eye. The heat was becoming unbearable, and his thirst was beginning to parch his throat. Should he, or should he not, go back and look for the gun? Glancing again at the burning sun and licking his chapped lips, he decided not to.

Crossing over to the time-suit, Henry noted with a sigh of relief that it was exactly as he remembered having left it the night before. Not waiting around for anything else to happen, he stood the suit up, stepped inside, pulled the front half shut, and flicked the ascent lever.

With a dizzy rush, he shot up into the blazing sky. After long minutes, he noted, by glancing down at the green ball of earth, that he'd stopped ascending.

Well, this is it, thought Henry, as he carefully moved the dial needle from the little curlicue design it was now on, clockwise up to the triangular geometric figure it had originally

rested on. Barring any wind-drift, or should he say time-drift, he would soon be stepping out of the suit into his backyard of 1952.

The first thing he would do would be to go straight into the kitchen and quench his thirst. And if Harriet said said one word about where he'd been all night, or why the junk hadn't been removed from the basement, he'd tell her quite bluntly to shut up—that he didn't have to give any accountings to her anymore. Besides, she wouldn't believe him if he told her. Furthermore, from now on he was going to wear *all* the pants in the family.

It was going to be good, seeing Harriet again.

He pushed the button—and again he fell into long ages of darkness.

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When consciousness returned, he once more found himself lying on the ground. The sky was a brilliant blue, and the, not-so-hot, sun seemed to be in the same position as when he'd left the prehistoric world of millions of years ago.

About to click the suit open, he glanced to his left. Instead of seeing part of his backyard, he saw nothing but uneven prairie. Quickly, he glanced in the opposite direction. More ragged prairie.

He forgot all about his thirst. Good Lord, had the A-bomb come during the twelve or so hours he'd been away? No, hardly that. Maybe some deadly gas or plague had wiped everything out, including buildings. Frantically, he jerked his thumb away from the suit release-button and slowly managed to get to his feet.

Looking around in all directions, he could see nothing but rough virgin prairie, dotted occasionally with stunted trees and barren rock. The only thing he recognized that told him he was in the right geographical location, was Yellow Rock, which had once stood in front of the city courthouse.

Henry could hardly believe his eyes! Had he made a mistake in setting the dial, and arrived far in the future—or before America had become settled?

Well, there was only one way to find out. Flicking the lever, he was again high in the sky. Looking down in all directions, he could see not the slightest trace of civilization.

FOR AN HOUR or so, Henry experimented with the dial setting—going different time-lengths into the future, then returning and going into the past.

Always the same landscape greeted him. Sometimes it was autumn or summer. Once, in the far future, it had been winter, with everything covered with snow, except Yellow Rock.

Finally, returning the needle to its original position, he returned to his own time.

For a long while, he stood gazing at the desolation all around him—at a loss as to what had become of everything. His thoughts haphazardly wandered back to the prehistoric past, and what had happened there.

Suddenly, he remembered what the other thing was that the baboon-creature had reminded him of! He sank down to the ground, weeping.

It had reminded him of man! *Homo Sapiens!* He pondered, and then everything became clear to him. In killing the baboon-beast, he had unwittingly destroyed some sort of link from which the human race had branched.

Sobs shook Henry's shoulders as he realized that this was the only theory that seemed to explain things. Now, he'd never see Harriet again. In spite of all her faults, he loved her. Nor would Joe the junk man or his students ever know he had changed.

Everything was gone!

Then Henry laughed. He would be gone, too, in a second; all he'd have to do was open the time-suit and step out of what must be its protective field. And he would never have been.

Suddenly, he stopped laughing! There was one possible fantastic way he might remedy matters. Flicking the ascent-lever, he moved the needle counter-clockwise, back to just before the curlicue mark. Then pressed the button...

●

THERE WAS some time-drift. After the familiar darkness, when he came to, he found himself under the giant fern-tree in which he'd spent the night before, instead of in the clearing.

In an instant, he was out of the suit and staring at a mind-shaking sight in the clearing—his number-one self shouting at the baboons, as the pale hairless link raised his club and headed straight for him!

Henry frantically hunted for the gun he'd lost, as he saw his earlier self pick up the rock to hurl at the link. It had to be here, somewhere around the tree! It was the only logical place he could have lost it.

Glancing up at the drama being acted out for the second time, Henry's heart sank. The rock glanced off the link's head and went spinning into the grass! He hadn't been in time! Now there would never be any humanity!

Dazedly he watched the fantastic sight of himself climbing into the time-suit and disappearing into the sky. Then, returning his gaze to the ground, he caught sight of the gun lying on the far side of the tree. What a joke, he thought as he picked up the pistol—now that it was too late!

Wait a minute! Was it too late? Of course not! All he'd have to do was get back inside his suit, go back in time a few minutes—this time, with the gun in hand ready to fire—throw open the suit, and let his first self have it. If he failed a second time in bumping his earlier self off before the rock could be thrown, he would keep going back in time until he didn't fail. It was all so simple; why hadn't he realized it sooner?

Once more in the suit, Henry moved the dial needle only slightly. Then, walking out into the clearing where his first self would be, he pressed the button.

This time, the blackness lasted only an instant.

Snapping the suit open, he saw his first self bending over the rock. With a grip of steel, he pointed the gun at his self that was *now* picking up the rock—

Carefully he lined the sight at the small of his first-self's back. He vaguely wondered if he would instantly vanish with the death of his first self—and never see Harriet, or his school, or anybody again.

But if his first self *did* die, or *had* died, how was it that it had gone into the future? How was it that he had returned to the time before his first-self had killed the link? How was it that he had become his second-self who was now going to kill his first-self? Which one of his two selves would die? Or would they both?

The whole thing suddenly reminded him of a story he'd once read called *The Lady Or The Tiger*. Well, there was only one way to find the answer to *his* question—

He squeezed the trigger....

★

Another Unusual Story by Charles Dye
THE SEVENTH WIND
appears in the current issue of
DYNAMIC SCIENCE FICTION

THE VISITORS

by C. H. Liddell

(illustrated by C. A. Murphy)

Some visions might not be simple projections from within...



The visitors float around my bedside . .

THE TROUBLE is with the words. The thing is that only an insane man could write this because it could happen only to an insane man. And the barrier is hard to get past. I mean the barrier that has been built up around the real me. I can think clearly, but I never know when the compulsion comes, and then the wrong words come out on the paper—

Or else I don't bother to write at all. I'm like a wheel spinning so fast the balance is precarious. I was pretty well educated before this psychosis clamped down; I know a lot of the catchphrases. The doctor's aren't sure yet what's wrong with me. There's only a tentative prognosis. It might be catatonia or schizophrenia—

IT IS A MOST DEADLY HOPELESS TRAP

Stop. I must try to be coherent, anyway. I'm the only one who can discriminate between the hallucinations and the reality. *I* can tell the difference, but naturally I can't make anyone else see it. They slip in among my hallucinations, and masquerade as delusions themselves. Even I find it difficult at times. I haven't got the anchor of sanity to cling to. I know I'm insane—that is, I know it when I'm halfway rational. When I'm on the skids, there is only this whirling, pris-

oning hell of sheer blinding darkness...

I can't even write this in a conventional form. I want to write it upside-down and backwards, and like a palimpsest, all over the paper. The psychiatrists like everything neatly arranged, but my mind *isn't* as neat as all that: I AM INSANE!

Case history: Roger Harmon, 38, white, unmarried, early neurotic and psychotic history—

Something like this is on my chart. I don't remember too much about the early days. I have been in a sanitarium before; I remember that there was something wrong even when I was a kid. Memories don't work quite right, especially since time itself has warped a bit to let The Visitors through.

The Visitors are not hallucinations; they are realities among my delusions. They came only lately. No one else can see or hear them; they are in tune with the vibrations of my brain. They explained it all quite clearly to me. They said I could tell the doctors

if I wished; the doctors would listen sympathetically, and ask me questions, and not believe anything. Auditory and visual hallucinations. Lord knows I had enough of those to begin with.

I saw demons. They were so conventional that I always knew, somehow, that they weren't real, even when they told me I had sinned. I heard them first. That was long before The Visitors came. The Visitors, as I say, are quite real, and they came from another space-time continuum. They wanted to visit and observe our time-sector without being noticed themselves; they needed a contact. You'd think they'd want somebody like Einstein, but that isn't the way it works. They don't want our race to know about them. I can imagine why. An animal won't act naturally if it knows it's being observed; perhaps The Visitors don't want humans to know they're being watched. Or there may be other reasons.

They are short, horrible deformed men with veined, huge heads. They never walk; they couldn't, on those legs. They can float. How they do it I don't know. Of course they're not in this exact time-space sector at all; they just maintain a contact with me somehow, partly through a mental bridge. Much that they tell me I can't understand. Their language is telepathy, though I often hear it as a sound; and it's so radically different in thought-concept from ours, that sometimes it seems like Mother Goose, and sometimes like advanced physics or metaphysics.

The words change and shift and I cannot set down what happened in coherent order I think that rat fat hat sat running funning dunning

NO

I have a compulsion to rhyme. Is that echolalia? I know a few of the phrases... I suppose I feel that if I occupy my mind with meaningless rhymed words it will stop The Visi-



tors from coming, and the others—

The others were terrible, too. All my life I have felt something vaguely wrong; there were things I wanted to do, though I couldn't have told why. There was the time I collected handkerchiefs. Meaningless. One day there were voices in my room.

"Roger Harmon is going to the window," they whispered. "He is going to fall out of the window. No, he isn't, but when he goes downstairs he will stumble and break his neck. He knows too much to live. We'll see that he doesn't live."

That was an auditory hallucination.

I MUST... STOP...

ALL RIGHT. That was a fairly bad time. I know they weren't real, but they seemed so, brightly-colored bugs crawling up my pajamas... I had to scream once. The orderly came. I was afraid I'd go into a wet pack again, but I shut my eyes and let them crawl, and in a minute it stopped. Mike—the orderly—asked me what was wrong. I said it was all right now.

But he had orders to give me a sedative if I needed one. I am still under observation. The doctors haven't quite decided on the nature of my psychosis. The delusions of persecution incline them toward paranoia, but there are complicating factors. I believe I know what they are. In the beginning, I had an ordinary psychosis; but then The Visitors came and upset the apple-cart. The gyroscope of my mind is oscillating wildly.

And words, the only means of communication, are a deadly barrier. The

Visitors are clever. They masquerade as hallucinations, and appear only to a man who has hallucinations already.

I have been resting quietly on the bed. I could feel movement in my head. But my muscles were relaxing. Colored lights swirled through the darkness between my temples. I feel more rational.

Looking back, as I can do now, I realize that those voices in my room were the beginning of the real trouble. Before that, of course, the seeds of the psychosis were germinating within me. Some are born with a dangerous hereditary factor; others are warped by the environment. I had both troubles. I cannot remember too much, and I don't like to try. It isn't pleasant. Besides, the important things happened after I was completely insane.

Yet there was no...terror...until The Visitors came. Until then, I had at least a certain elation to sustain me, mixed at times with a black depression that left me utterly miserable. The voices continued. Sometimes they said they would protect me; at other times they threatened. And often they told me I had sinned, and must be punished.

I have sinned. I must have. I don't know why. I must make amends somehow. The voices still come—

There were tactile hallucinations finally. It was monstrous to touch glass and feel fur. It was monstrous to feel my skin coated with gelid, icy substance. And after they brought me here, for a while, they put something in my food. Foul things. The voices warned me of poison. I would not eat. Now they prepare my food separately and sterilize it, so I can eat again.

There was a blackness far back in my mind. I always knew when it came. It didn't come often. It was shapeless and alien and curious. It grew from nothing, in a direction I could not understand, and I always felt it would engulf me utterly. But it never did. It merely watched. I called it the Cloud, and wondered what it was. I could never feel or taste or smell it. Nor could I see it, exactly. It has not appeared for a long time now, though the other things never leave me. The voices are subdued when The Visitors appear...

THIS IS the way it was. After I came to this place, there was a long period of baths and wet packs and a few times in the restraining jacket—which was terrible, because it was hard to breathe, and the bright bugs crawled over my face. I learned, after a while, to accept these things. I realized that I was handicapped. The normal reliefs of normal men were not for me; I was insane; I was damned. I came to accept that. In my rational periods, I accepted it as I would have accepted the loss of my legs, or a broken back. There is a wall, and I was on the wrong side of it. The world I loved, the world I wanted to be a part of, was on the other side of that wall and I couldn't climb it.

Perhaps the doctors can cure me. But I think I was damned before I was born.

So I stayed here, for a long time—or perhaps it was another sanitarium. They are much alike. The faces are identical, with the same look of wary, watchful, half-friendly alertness. The voices spoke to me, and occasionally the Cloud loomed up out of the mistiness in my mind, and grew, and sat watchful for a while, and dwindled and vanished. I was released, I think. There was a bright memory—but then the voices shouted, and panic caught at my throat, and I ran. Then I was here again, with a needle jabbing my arm as I screamed.

Then The Visitors came.

Insanity doesn't necessarily mean dulled perception. I was often able to regard life with a detached, critical viewpoint, because I wasn't really a part of it. Many of the patterns of civilization, I saw, were meaningless. There was a sort of organized chaos

about the life I watched. Poverty and booms and wars and new inventions; and the solid, striving mass of humanity moving relentlessly forward to some unknown goal. I could see that something else was to come. Something different. Perhaps something better.

I had forgotten it would be something alien.

I felt Them probing. There was trouble in the sanitarium that night; a homicidal patient broke loose, in the violent ward. The sedative orders were doubled. It was the peak of a cycle, apparently. Really, it was The Visitors searching for a contact.

I was alone in my room. The door was closed and locked. I had been watching the glass panel, with its chicken-wire let into the glass, waiting for the doctor to make his rounds. Then I felt a funneling something slip into my head, move away, and come back. It swirled and dug and grew larger. For a moment, I thought it was the Cloud coming but—but the Cloud is a shapeless, quiet, watchful mass that never troubles me. This troubled me. I felt a high, singing tension of excitement.

They came out of the warped distances and hung in the air before me. A clear darkness surrounded them; it wasn't exactly darkness, for I could see the walls of the room past them. There were three. They looked at me and I could see the knotted blue veins on those huge heads throbbing.

Their minds spoke.

"He is suitable. His intelligence is above average. His psychosis is acceptable."

I knew immediately that they weren't hallucinations. I got up to call the orderly. They made me lie down on the bed again. I opened my mouth to scream, but they froze my throat.

"We will not harm you."

I said, in my mind, "You're real. You're real. You're real."

"We are real. We will not harm you. We want to use you to—"

The voices shouted from the corners.

YOU HAVE SINNED YOU HAVE SINNED YOU HAVE SINNED—

I screamed and screamed.

THE VISITORS came back later, but it took time before I could talk with them coherently. Once the doctor came in while they were there, but they didn't move. He didn't notice them. After he had gone—

"Are you invisible?"

"We aren't entirely in your space-time plane, Roger Harmon."

"How do you know my name?"

"We do not. We think of *you,* and your mind translates that into sound-symbols acceptable to your ego-consciousness. You automatically choose the thought-concepts most familiar and understandable to you. Your very mode of thought is different from ours."

"What do you want with me?"

"To market, to market, to buy a fat pig—"

"What?"

They couldn't make it clear; it sounded like nonsense. I asked them where they came from.

"Over the hills and far away. Time. The future. But in another space and another plane of probability as well. We are studying your world."

"You'll see little of it from here. I hardly ever leave this room."

"That doesn't matter." The blue veins pulsed on their heads. "Physically you may have to stay in this room. But we do not. Your mind gives us the..." A word I could not understand. "...to enable us to reach out anywhere in your time sector. You are the catalyst."

Fingers touched me. A Thing, red and terrible, was climbing up out of the floor. It hated me. The voices laughed. I closed my eyes and shrieked. I went spinning whirling vortexing—

THE BAD time passed. Some time later, The Visitors came back.

"We are learning about your world."

"Why me? Why choose me?"

"You could not understand our plans. Your civilization stands at a crossroad. Great powers have been discovered. The planes of probability are shifting. This is important to us, who are of the possible future."

"But why choose me?"

"We needed a contact. Your world must not know of us."

"Why?"

"We are too alien to be acceptable to your people. Alien to you. To your race. Listen. There are many probable futures. None knows which exist in a certain plane of reality. There are many planes of reality; there are variations of probability. We must search the past to find what is the true reality, and if necessary to change that past."

I couldn't understand much of this. All I knew was that The Visitors were alien.

"You will not be harmed; your world will not be harmed. Any changes we may make will seem perfectly natural."

"But what about me?"

"We need you. You are our contact."

"I can't stand it. Take someone else."

"No. No one will believe you if you talk about us. We must remain unknown to your people."

"But you're horrible—"

THEY WERE horrible. That was because they were alien. I came to know that they were utterly different from humanity, much more so that even their monstrous appearance indicated. Their thoughts moved in different channels. Their bodies were different, and worked on a different plan. Their neural structure was completely different. I could feel the energy pouring out of them. The tension was unendurable. Always, after they had stayed for a while, I began screaming.

The doctors were still puzzled. They often questioned me. I told them about The Visitors, and they exchanged baffled glances.

"You've never seen these Visitors until lately?"

"No. No. I haven't."

"Are they like that Cloud you mentioned?"

"The Cloud has been with me for years, off and on. It never bothers me."

"Are they like the voices? Do they sound like the same voices?"

"No. The voices are bodiless. The Visitors talk without words, really. They told me you wouldn't believe in them."

"Oh, I don't know about that. Suppose you tell me a bit more about—"

"YOU DAMNED LIAR YOU DON'T BELIEVE A WORD I'M SAYING FOR GOD'S SAKE—"

BUT THE doctors tried to help. They were discouraged. Until The Visitors came they had been optimistic. They had planned metrazol shock treatment, I think, and they were sanguine about its success. But, The Visitors brought in a new factor, and threw the psychosis into a new and undiagnosed pattern.

For a while The Visitors stopped coming. They explained why, but I couldn't understand it. After that, there were only the voices, and then a few other nasty things. And the doctors *did* start shock treatment. It was violent, but it helped.

My mind cleared.

Time is warped. I don't remember how long that went on. But the doctors were less restrained when they talked to me, and I could feel new hope in the air.

But The Visitors came back. The Cloud didn't, but The Visitors did, one night when I was in an open ward. I had been moved there three days before...

"Further investigations."

"No. Go away. Please. I can't stand it."

"We won't harm you."

"You're doing it. I can feel the... tension...pouring out of you. It's tightening me up inside."

"Curious. He's ordinary homo sapiens, of course, but specially receptive due to the psychosis. The pineal and the thalamus...absorbing our up the hill to get a pail of water Jack fell down—"

The words. I couldn't understand the words. They were thinking in abstract terms alien to me, and I translated them into my nearest equivalent —which was pure nonsense.

"Get out. Go away. Leave me alone. I can't stand this."

"This particular contact is necessary. We must maintain our energy quotient in order to keep in touch with your time-sector. You happen to be especially receptive. In fact, if you weren't, we couldn't use you."

"How long will you be here?"

"Many cycles. We are embarking on a thorough study of—"

"What's the matter, Roger?"

The orderly's voice.

"Nothing. They're back."

"Who's back?"

"The Visitors. They won't go away. GET THEM OUT OF HERE!"

"Nurse. Better take a look at Harmon here—"

"We won't harm you. We are at present extending along a mental dimension to study the sub-basic patterns of nonsense nonsense nonsense—"

"DAMN YOU GET AWAY FROM ME FOR GOD'S SAKE—"

I WAS BACK in solitary.

There was no hope.

I was insane. The wall had been erected to shut me out from humanity. The doctors had stopped looking hopeful. As long as my psychosis followed more-or-less conventional patterns, they could expect to cure me sometime. Catatonia, schizophrenia, those can yield to metrazol or electric shock.

But apply a jolting variable factor violently to the gyroscope, and it's quite impossible to get it back in balance and keep it running smoothly and steadily.

The Visitors didn't mean me any harm. I knew that. But their very presence was enough to keep me in a psychotic state. They were aliens. They were something that may evolve on Earth or something like Earth sometime in a possible future. I used to sit down and think of this tiny speck of light—this time and space and planet—and all the gigantic unknown surrounding it, peopled with Lord knows what.

And I was just one man, alone, and handicapped to start with.

Suddenly, one day, I realized that The Visitors were doing it on purpose. They didn't want me cured. As long as I was insane, they could appear to me at any time, and it wouldn't matter if I talked. But if I were sane, I might possibly convince somebody else of their reality.

Although if I *did* talk, under those circumstances, I knew damned well I'd land right back in a wet pack.

I tried not to think. I tried to sink down into a dull, quiet grayness, where not even the voices could reach me. They were back again, worse than ever. The Cloud hadn't appeared and I rather missed it; it was one of the hallucinations that never upset me.

The Visitors kept coming. I grew worse. The doctors examined me again, and I could tell that they had given up hope.

That night I lay on my bed crying a little. There was no way out, I knew. I could already feel that singing tension beginning inside my head, and I knew The Visitors were coming. I was alone, utterly and completely alone. No one knows loneliness except the insane.

They came.

I begged them to leave me—for a while, anyway. They looked at me out of their cold eyes. The veins on their heads throbbed bluely.

"How long will he live?"

"Long enough."

"I don't want to live," I said. "I

want to die; I'd rather be dead. You bring back everything—all the stuff that used to bother me. The voices. The taste in my food. I'm afraid to move. I can feel it, right now, that something that pours out of you. Maybe it's what keeps you alive. But I'm not built to stand it. Let me die."

"You are unimportant. You are a useful tool—"

VERY SMALL and dim, far back in my mind, the Cloud started to come. I was glad. I hadn't felt the Cloud for months now. Not since The Visitors came. The familiar, swirling, smooth motion expanded within my head, and suddenly there was the Cloud, watchful as ever. The same Cloud that had been with me, from time to time, for years now. It was like an old friend.

Something happened then. There was a movement among The Visitors. I felt...

"What is this? Answer me! What is this?"

"It's the Cloud. I'm glad..."

But the Cloud was growing. It was all inside my head. Or, at least, I could see it only inside my head. Everything got vague and confused, and the voices began screaming from the walls.

And—

"The Cloud? What does he mean? I can feel—"

The Cloud grew. The Visitors shifted and swayed.

YOU FOOLS THIS MAN IS MINE!

My voice. No, the Cloud's voice. But the Cloud couldn't speak, could it?

The Visitors were screaming.

"We weren't the first! We weren't the first!"

They were going insane. The Cloud was all around them. I was shouting. The orderly was unlocking the door. Nurses were coming in.

They didn't see The Cloud. They didn't see The Visitors. But I saw. I SAW!

I knew. The Cloud had been using me, too, just as The Visitors had. But it hadn't harmed me. It was much wiser than The Visitors, and much more advanced. It didn't need to harm me to use me as a contact.

And it was far more alien than The Visitors. Alien even to them. It touched them, with its strange energies out of an unthinkably distant time and space and probability, and The Visitors went insane as I watched, and screamed and were lost in a direction I could not follow or understand.

They could not harm me. I belonged to the Cloud. It guarded its property.

I heard the voices thundering from the walls. I felt ice crawl up my body. I smelled strange perfumes, and there was a new taste on my tongue and the Cloud filled the room and the hospital and the world and infinity beyond it and downswirling into white darkness beyond and far and not returning ever and ever—

LAST WEEK I was discharged, cured, from the sanitarium. The treatment took many months, but finally the board pronounced me sane. saner, *I* knew, than I had ever been. I do not think there will be any relapse.

They said they had cured me. The metrazol shock had jolted me back to sanity—that, and the other therapy. Fair enough. The Visitors never returned, at least. How could they?

As for the Cloud—

Like the Visitors, it had come out of space and time and probability to investigate this world. But it was more alien than The Visitors, and more powerful. Powerful enough to make me...

The Cloud, for its own obscure purposes, is an observer—

I have been pronounced sane; I walk in this world, and watch men build the future. But I know I am not sane. I gave the right answers to the psychiatrists; my reactions were those of a normal man. But they weren't *my* reactions. It wasn't I who gave the answers; it was someone else. Something else. It was because

BECAUSE
BECAUSE
BECAUSE

hard to write the truth hard to get past this barrier in my mind

And to make myself understood because my real self is still submerged under the

the shadow, the ether, the ombre the vapor the cumulus the

No. Pretending to be me pretending to be cured while the real me is helpless and still

UNDER THE
CLOUD
CLOUD
CLOUD



The Melting Pot

SFA has for many years been the "bible" of the S-F collector, buyer, and connoisseur. Probably the best market if you've anything to buy or sell in the line of mags, books, etc., and an excellent source of estimating the various values on new, used, and out of print material. But aside of informative ads, this publication has long been noted for its many fine and literary articles relevant to science-fantasy fiction, and is considerably noted for its many authorized and studious articles relevant to S-F. It is one of the few items in the field of amateur journalism of which collectors are constantly trying to secure back issues—mainly as a guide to values on many items or for its many outstanding articles. Some recently used are, "A Study of Van Vogt", by Arthur Cox—one of the finest analyses on a contemporary author made to date; a description of the writer Hal Clement and his works, by Anthony More; "Philosophy: From Fantasy to Fact", by Clyde Beck; and "Conversation On Criticism", by Frederick Shroyer. Entertaining news; notes; very good interior illustrations; and informative book-reviews all go in making every issue of SFA one of the finest. Incidentally, the editor also pays for all articles and reviews used in SFA. A "must" on anyone's subscription list.

STF TRADER— K. Martin Carlson, 1028 Third Ave., Moorehead, Minn.

(*Continued From Page* 98)

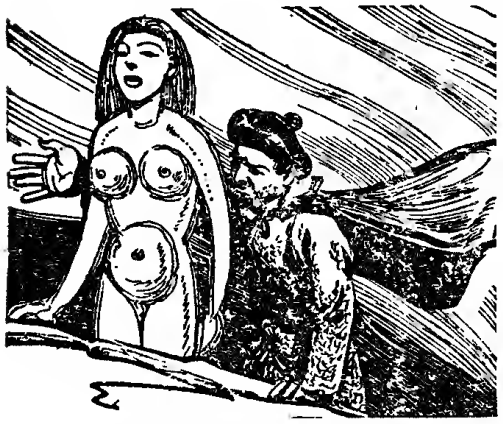
10c a copy, 4 for 25c. No schedule found, but I think it's a monthly; bi-monthly at the very latest.

SFT-T is now quite a few years old, and the best swap, sell-and-buy, ads-fan-mag next to *Science Fiction Advertiser*. Ad rates are about the lowest available anywhere: a full page $1.00; half 50c; quarter 25c. If you send in ready and prepared stencils, it costs half the price, and there are no charges at all if you submit one hundred and fifty "ready sheets". Though STF-T has only a 150 copy distribution—while *Science-Fiction Advertiser* puts out around fifteen hundred—each item by itself has a well deserved place for different pocketbooks.

THE LITTLE CORPUSCLE— Lynn Hickman, 239 E. Broad St., Statesville, North Carolina. Primarily a fan-club publication.

Though the old song says that "There is nothing finer than to be in Carolina...", I doubt if this awkward and haphazardly-edited publication could ever bear out the melody. If, however, the 270 or more members listed in it could get a few shekels together and organize a better publication, there may be some hope yet. I do not know if TLMA's members get another publication, for this may only be a one-shot item by appearances; but I think a good club ought to have a decent official organ, with more than

[*Turn To Page* 124]



1. "The Green Thumb", Poul Anderson: well-written, carefully plotted. Hard to say, but maybe the best story used in SFQ, so far.

2. "A Little Knowledge", Judith Merril: refreshing and nicely-paced in tempo (10 *pages* you call a novelet, yet?)

3. "Aristotle", John Christopher: unusual, perhaps slightly *dry*, but on Heinlein's level—though it could have easily been de Camp, all but for the name of the author.

4. "Shoo Fly!", W. Malcolm White: a short-short, but nevertheless, a gem. Too bad the writer didn't develop the idea further as he went along, for novelet or novel-length possibilities; this little *bijou* has many.

5. "The Four Commandments", Robert Abernathy: *ibid*, or ditto.

6. "Escape Valve", Charles Dye: there were also great possibilities with this yarn, except that the writer obscured them with trite dialogue and too much routine formula. Perhaps I am hard to please, but the story, nevertheless, left me empty and disappointed.

7. "Dugal Was a Spaceman", Joe Gibson: maybe I'm too choosy, yet I'm sure the stefantasy field has enough of a stockpile of space opera, to the extent that another wave of it in the field after twenty-five years, no matter how well done, would be a little too soon. Besides, I have never thought of space-opera as being even half-heartedly representative of science-fantasy fiction. To me, it is *not science-fiction!*

One for R. R. Anger; *two* for Nan Warner; and *three* for R. J. F. Knutson... that's my selection for the order of the "favorite letter" writer for the day.

Anent the nearly-perennial discussion governing the styles and fashions of What the Well-Dressed Spaceship Gal of the Future must wear, I can just see Hedda Hopper, or Adrian, of tomorrow riding in his or her spaceship, models dressed in various fashions exiting from pressurized cabins and floating out into the void. All the while the rocket jets would throb, to the rhythm of "A Pretty Girl is Like a Melody", as the models float past prospective buyers and judges, who are all the time comfortably seated in observation-compartments, Martian juleps in hand, behind large plastiglass, or maybe glassite (I forget the exact composition of these transparent walls—it's been some time since I've been to one of these shows, y'know) dormers.

Calvin Thomas Beck, 84-16 Elmhurst Ave., Elmhurst, LI, N. Y.

(I cut a bit out of the opening of your letter, Mr. Beck, not because it carried a complaint, but because the complaint didn't refer to SFQ; I'll gladly—well, willingly—publish the complaint in the magazine to which it refers.

I showed that part of your letter referring to him to Sprague, when he was here recently, and a postcard lately received says he wrote you, but that his letter was returned. So I'll let him answer you in our next issue, since there wasn't time to ship your letter to him at this late date. ...It might be, though, that de Camp has already written material about Fallson, and couldn't duplicate it in the article he did for us. This was the reason for some omissions in other articles we used, about which readers were curious; we'd have liked to have had them, but the editors who published Sprague's earlier articles on the same subjects might not have been too happy.

Okay, okay; you win—you, and all the others who have objected to my putting articles on the coupon along with the story titles: as of this issue, we do it no more!

Your comments about fashion shows of the future make the thought of returning to the relative before the interplanetary era a bit more acceptable.)

●

THEY'RE SO COMMON...

Dear Editor:

Oh! Oh! Oh! Why did I *ever* subscribe to SFQ? Simple: because I thought the sto-

ries were good; still do; fact is, I think that they're better than ever! Only why must you have such a way to send them? What'm I talking about? Simply that my copy of SFQ looked like it had just come through a saw mill... Oh well, I'll stand it; the stories are worth it!

More about those stories: the best was by Poul Anderson, "The Green Thumb". You seem to be getting a lot by him lately, huh? I don't mind, though; he's good.

I have a suggestion, though; why don't you get some well-known authors? Now don't get me wrong; I'm not against your breaking in new authors. I'd just like to see some of the old *masters* around, every now and then.

What's this about your putting it up for vote whether *we're* going to have a page on fan publications? Oh no! Gads, man, they're so common; why every magazine has one. Fact is, some of the fanzines even review other fanzines. If a person wants to see if there are any good fanzines out, they can just pick up that magazine known as *Amazing Stories;* the same goes for *Fantastic Adventures.*

The best letter was by R. J. F. Knutson... and, oh, it's awful to think that a female won the contest. Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh!

Gilbert E. Menicucci,
675 Delano Avenue,
San Francisco 12, *Calif.*

PS—If any of you out there would like to write me about the flying saucer mystery, any of you who are interested in same, I would be glad to receive your letters. If you decide to write, address letter to: IFSB of California, and then put my name and address.

(We sent Mr. Menicucci a good, clean copy of the February issue; and I'd appreciate any other subscriber having similar difficulties letting us know. You can't always blame those valiant carriers which naught deters, but sometimes the mail certainly looks as if it had been carried by the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.

Just whom might you mean by old masters? It's a relative thing, after all. When I started reading science fiction, they were Flint, Hall, Merritt, Verne, Wells, Burroughs, Serviss, Farley, etc. Not in order of merit. Many names which came up during my following of science-fiction have now fallen in to the "masters" category.

See the letter below for another view of the fan magazine review situation.)

NOT WELL COVERED

Dear RWL:

So far as fan-magazine reviews go, a number of the other books carry them, after a fashion; but I don't get the impression that the field is well-covered in any sense of the word.

I'd like to see a *selective,* reasonably literate and intelligent survey of such amateur publications issued by those we rather loosely refer to as science-fiction fans. Like yourself, I'm dubious as to how many titles would be covered, or whether any particular title would be reviewed each issue. Can't say that it makes much difference to me, though; if there are three or four each issue worth talking about, then I'd like to see a department.

They come in all sizes and shapes, and all degrees of literacy—from what I've heard, and from the samples I've seen—and the field as a whole is one to be encouraged, I think. There's no point in viewing them, for discussion, in the same category as professional publications; but surely, some show enough interest to make it worth our while to read about a particular issue, or even a particular title which may be consistently interesting.

So, why not try the department, confining it to discussion of such issues or titles which should be of interest to the general reader of science-fiction, rather than the fan himself. We may as well assume that the fan gets most of them, and sees reviews and discussions of the general lot within the pages of the ones he sees.

Jay Tyler,
127 *East 28th Street,*
New York, NY.

(This is more or less the basis on which we are considering the fan magazine reviews.)

●

A TRAGIC TALE

Dear Bob:

I've got a bone to pick with all newspaper reporters. You're receiving this letter because, indirectly, it concerns *Science Fiction Quarterly.*

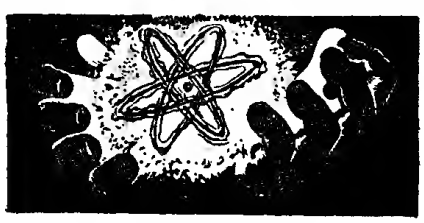
Here goes...:

After reading an editorial in a local paper

(which will remain nameless) concerning—among other things—flying saucers, and the old Gernsback *Amazing Stories*, and seeing that the writer was interested in Science Fiction, I wrote him a long letter dealing with SF, the PSFS (Philadelphia Science Fiction Society), and the coming World SF Convention in Philly.

Four days later, the man called me up and asked if he could attend one of our PSFS meetings. The next Sunday he attended the meeting with me, and afterwards asked me to come down someday to his paper's news-office. Well the next Saturday I was being quizzed by him and a woman. I kept repeating about the World Convention in Philly, hoping to get as much publicity as we could. Finally I showed her my membership-card from the Chicago Convention. She immediately turned it around (probably guided by some dero) and started copying the stuff about colonization rights on the Moon. After they finished quizzing me, the man went out and bought a SF magazine for me to hold while a photograph was taken. The magazine was none other than *Science Fiction Quarterly*. Now don't be letting your ego flare up Bob. SFQ was probably picked because of the two big words *Science Fiction*, which are on the cover of your mag. Then I went home and waited for the paper to come out. This paper is put out once every week.

Finally the fateful day came and I rushed down to the newsstand to buy the paper. After I bought out all the papers I rushed home again to read the article. Well first of all everything was cut out of the picture but my face (although they later sent me the original photograph—which had everything in it, your mag included). Next I felt a weak feeling in the pit of my stomach when I read what they had titled the article. *"Boy Acquires Title To Moon Site"*. You think this is bad, you oughta read the article itself. (Boy is my face red). To give you a little idea, they didn't say one thing about the PSFS or the Philly Con. Rather the whole article played up my going to the moon. Can you beat that. I go and real serious like explain about SF, the PSFS, the Philly con, and they write an article about my going to the Moon. (By the way this was all on the first page.)



Well, this wasn't bad enough; I had to go to school the next day. Guess what my new nickname is. Yea, that's right; you guessed it—"Moony".

Lyle "Moony" Kessler,
2450-76th Avenue,
Philadelphia 38, Penna.

(This is the sort of thing one would have expected, ten years ago; it's rather astonishing to find it happening in 1952.)

●

THAT'S RIGHT: WE WERE WRONG

Dear RWL:

Hardly recognized the February issue—wha' hoppen to the cover? The femme was actually *dressed!* Whatever is SFQ coming to anyway? (I buy your mag in *spite* of the covers, Bob).

You slightly underestimated "The Green Thumb's" effect on your devoted readers. It was better than the rest of the stories in the past few issues, and far better than the others in this issue.

So—

1. THE GREEN THUMB
1. Gwen Cunningham
2. A LITTLE KNOWLEDGE
2. Marian Cox
3. DUGAL WAS A SPACEMAN
3. R. R. Anger
4. ESCAPE VALVE
5. THE FOUR COMMANDMENTS
6. THE GREAT CHARLATANS
7. ARISTOTLE
8. SHOO FLY! (uninteresting)

On the whole, you are getting better stories all the time, so I have only one gripe—is there any way you can arrange to have SFQ, etc. put on sale here in Provo? Seems like most of these characters who sell mags here never even heard of sf. The answer, you say, is a sub? Well, that would be very nice and so forth, *but*—at the present time, my husband is attending college; so a spare two or three dollars lying around is non-existent. (Besides, stf is juvenile trash—says he). Anybody want to trade mags by mail? It's about the only way I can get most of

them! I have around 175 back ishs of various mags so we ought to be able to do business. Send me your lists!

A fanzine review would be nice—*if* it were written in a different way than the usual run-of-the-mill mags. For instance, you could—for the first time—tell us something about the editor in a short paragraph or two—have him or her write it or send you the essential details.

Hmmm—what have we here? A mistake? A mistake in SFQ?? Why, Bob! And it's a very important one, too, in a way. It says "Volume 1, No. 2". Now as any moron or steady reader knows it should be "Volume 2, No. 2"—right?

I *do* like that li'l line inside where it says what the cover's supposed to illustrate. (It did this time, anyway.) The other one's ok, too—where it lets us in on the secret of when the next issue will be around.

Let's continue to have those interesting articles by de Camp, and other competent authors. He really did it up brown this time.

Please—*don't* cut down the size of the letter department whatever else you may cut. If you have to cut anything, make it the book reviews. They may be good, but all the other mags have them, too, and we wouldn't miss them.

Carol McKinney,
385 North 8th Street,
Provo, Utah

(Yup, you have me with my nether limbs exposed; the contents page should have listed the February issue as Volume 2, Number 2; I caught the error, but so late that it slipped out of my hands and into print. I gloom.)

●

THERE SHOULD BE NO KNIGHT

Dear Editor:

Let's be different for once; let's discuss the stories in SFQ's February issue. I'm sorry to have to say this, but Poul Anderson's "Green Thumb" just didn't ring the bell; I like Poul's fiction efforts usually but "GT" was one of his poorest stories in some time. I put this at the bottom of my list.

John Christopher's "Aristotle" unquestionably earned top honors—very unusual story. Glad to see Robert Abernathy make an appearance, even tho "The Four Commandments" was too short to really let him unlimber his pen. Charles Dye (Now an editor in his own right I believe) is always entertaining; Orban's illustration helped to make this a superior story. Nice bit of "Oh how we hate those corporations" propaganda put forth by Gibson, too "pat" a solution, methinks. "Shoo Fly" was readable; White couldn't be a pen-name for yourself, could it? Didn't care for Judith Merril's novelet; she can do much better than that.

I have a bone to pick with you (and numerous other editors, also). Must we have those book-review departments? If one had collected the necessary cash to purchase a book, the sarcastic, "not worth your while" attitude of Knight would have influenced one to not waste his money. Every mag seems to have a book-review department; I'm sick of them. Few books are worth the ultra-high prices they bring nowdays, anyhow. Toss out Knight's column and replace it with a fanzine review column. The addition of such a column will gain you many readers, as I personally know some stf fans that bought *Amazing* (in later years) simply to read Rog Phillips' "Club House".

Suggestions as to authors I'd like to see in SFQ: Roger Dee, Walter Kubilius, Alfred Coppel, Basil Wells, Walt Miller—and more, much more, by Robert Abernathy. Artwork! Luros' interior illos are OK. Don't care for Orban, couldn't you get Lawrence, Beechan or Schomburg?

How many issues of Pre-war SFQ were published?

Paul Mittelbuscher,
Sweet Springs, Missouri.

(At present, Paul, you're a voice in the wilderness on the question of Mr. Knight's reviews, for the praises have been loud and many. The sad facts of life include those that numerous books, in the considered opinion of critics judging by established standards, are not worth the buyer's money or time. An honest critic does not hesitate to state the case when he considers a book bad; but he must give reasons for so stating, so that—whether you can accept his reasons or not—you will know it is not merely a matter of personal like and dislike. Thus, when such a critic *praises* a book, you can feel that his recommendation means something; while the nod from a reviewer who likes everything is of little or no value whatsoever.

No one expects you, or me, or anyone else, to agree with any given critic—includ-

ing the critic himself—at any particular time, or at any time whatever. He cannot force you to buy or not to buy, to read or not to read; he assumes that, in reading his comments, you are asking for his opinion. But what you choose to do about it is your own affair. If he deflates a book which you enjoyed reading, that should not impair your enjoyment; if he thumbs-down a book you haven't yet bought—and if you've come to find him reliable, generally—then it may be a good idea to see if you can't borrow the volume in question for a look-see before investing. On any particular item, you may find that you and he do not see eye-to-eye; after all, if critics and general readers agreed universally, then there wouldn't be any need for critics.

At his best, the worthwhile critic is one who can save you the pain of discovering a book is worthless *after* you've paid your money; or steer you on to a book you appreciate, but might not have picked up yourself, or can help you decide which of a number of possible purchases, where your time and/or means are more limited than the supply of titles, is most likely to give you the best value.

There were ten issues of the pre-war SFQ. ...And your editor doesn't write under the name of White on dark nights—or any other kind.)

●

AGGRAVATION

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

I had written a letter to the editor of another science-fiction magazine, about a year ago—and I never expected to see it in print; so, in my innocence, I gave my name and address, and with no request that they be withheld. Came the deluge! Advertisements, legible and illegible, for fantasy, science-fiction, horror tales, and what have you! It was not until I discovered in your letter-section a letter signed, "Name withheld" that I scrapped my vow never again to write a "letter to the editor".

Re: the cover-girl controversy, I objected strenuously to the state of undress artists found it necessary to show on the girl of the future—*until* I started bringing already-read copies to work for the other members of the lab to read, if they so desired. And the men, who, evidently, had not yet been introduced to science-fiction, picked the books with the most-undressed girls on the covers to read first.

I have been buying and reading every science-fiction magazine on the newsstands since 1929, but never saved a copy—always pitched them into the wastebasket afterwards. However, for the past three months, I've been disposing of them by placing them on the library-tables at work, and there's now a very-circulating library of some 50 to 75 magazines.

To me, the purchase-price and reading-time spent on science-fiction magazines is a gamble; of every ten stories, there's at least one very good, several mediocre, and more which were time and money wasted. But I've been an addict for too long; I couldn't give them up now!

Please do not give up story-space for "fanzine reviews". They are much too plentiful already; and, to me, it seems pitiful that anyone should have to spend his time reading the myriads of "fanzines" there seem to be—and not only pitiful, but silly, to pay anyone a salary for spending his time in such an inane manner.

Of course, there is every possibility that you will not print this; but, if perchance you should, *please* don't print my name and address—I like to receive mail, but by mail I mean *letters*—not the flood of junk poured poured on anyone unfortunate enough to get on a "letter-section" mailing-list.

Incidentally, my reason for disliking the "Four Commandments" (as you noticed on my preference coupon) is not the content of the story, but the form. If it had been written more to my taste—in story form—I should have been tempted to give it first place. The idea is one to be considered by all dreamers of an "answer-machine".

Name Withheld

(As I've indicated before, I'm willing to run letters anonymously, if the writer requests, but not a letter sent anonymously in the first place. Having been deluged myself with various tidbits of hardly-wanted reading-matter, I can appreciate your predicament—and hope that any other readers who have suffered likewise, or who fear such a fate, will not forego writing to our publications on such grounds. A simple request to withhold a name, or address, or both—or a statement that a letter is not for publication—will always be honored; for while any letter you write becomes the property of the person, or firm, to which it is addressed, once you mail it, no letter may be published without your permission. Letters addressed to letter-departments are assumed to be written for publication, with the name of sender, or both name and address, *unless* the writer states otherwise.

It's rather disheartening to note your finding, over a range of years, that only one out of ten stories is really satisfactory to you; yet, considering the amount of science-fiction that appears, this is not a bad ratio at all. Of course, every editor who reads this hopes that most of the "one-out-of-ten-stories" appeared in his pages.

Good heavens, Anonymous, I'm not *hiring* anyone to sit around and peruse fan-magazines the live-long day, at a handsome—or even good-looking—salary! Nope; what I expect to do is to consider some reviews by a fan who gets most of them, and reads them for his own interest—but from a fan who has some sense of discrimination about what he praises or recommends.)

●

BARKIS IS WILLIN'

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

Just a note of appreciation on a better than good issue of SFQ, with particular favor toward Anderson's "Green Thumb"; Dye's "Escape Valve"; and Merril's "A Little Knowledge". The first ended in refreshing ambiguity; the second is another indication of how the author has developed within the course of a year or so; and the third stands out as one of the writer's best offerings. I assume that it was conceived during the great dianetics era; if so, then its excellence shows in that it stands out even without the background hovering around us.

The two short-shorts, "Four Commandments" and "Shoo Fly!" also struck my fancy; congratulations to Messers Abernathy and White for not trying to blow these gems up to a pretensous size. They both left me with the feeling that I wished they'd been longer, and that is a good feeling to have; analysis indicated that they would not have been as good had they been expanded.

On your "fanzine review" inquiry, I'm willing to see it once, at least. So long as it's interesting reading, and not too long, it'll make for variety—and, who knows, there might be some interesting material in the amateur press.

Wallace McKinley,
New Canaan, Conn.

(I've frequently found interesting items in the "fan press", although one often has to sort a lot of sad material to find them. A good review department would point out what was generally worth a reader's while, for those who might be interested in looking at the best, but not inclined to plow through everything.)



WILLY LEY—GUEST OF HONOR

Dear Bob:

The biggest news here in Philly is that Willy Ley has accepted our invitation, and will be the guest of honor, and principal speaker, at the 11th World Science Fiction Convention, September 5-7.

Some 250 fans have already become members of the 11th Convention, but there's room for thousands more in the Bellevue Stratford Hotel, where we are going to have some of the finest hotel-accomodations on the east coast—if not throughout the country. Incidentally, the Bellevue has established a special rate for all of us: $6.00 for singles, and $10.00 for doubles. That's strictly pre-inflation rates.

Lester del Rey and Milton A. Rothman tell me that the program is shaping up nicely, but that it is too early to release a definite schedule. Incidentally, however, you, and the thousands of *Science Fiction Quarterly* fans, are a definite part of this program. Any suggestions as to speakers or special features, any skits or programs that you have put on at your own meetings—let us hear about them if you think other fans would be interested. That way, they might be scheduled on the program; and that way, the Convention will be more than ever the 11th World of fans.

But, most of all, be sure that you send that buck ($1.00, pre-or-post inflation, just so long as it isn't Confederate) to Box 2019, Philadelphia 3, Penna., so you, too, can be a member in the greatest Science Fiction Convention of all—the 11th World in Philadelphia, 1953.

Tom Clareson,
11th World Science Fiction Convention,
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★

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The Melting Pot

(*continued from page 116*)

just a roster of names and sloppy editing. The price is 20c per issue, and it is "free to members of TLMA, BSAW, NAPOLEON FANTASY CLUB, and the FANETTES", although some might wonder *why!*

•

I'm running close to the limit, so the best I can do with other titles received is to list them, and make a capsule comment. If this department continues, my policy will be to spend most of my space on items that strike me as being of greatest interest (or where the potential reader should be warned) rather than trying to make some conversation about everything. So, if your publication falls into the supplementary list, it is not because this reviewer considered it bad, or even poor—unless he says so; it's merely a case of others striking him as being more suitably-recommended to the potential new leader of fan-publications, for whom this department is designed.

•

SPACE-SHIP— Bob Silverberg, 760 Montgomery St., Brooklyn 13, N.Y. 10c an issue, 3 for 25c. Fair editing.

FAN TO SEE—Larry Touzinsky, *2911 Minnesota Ave., St. Louis 18, Mo. 10c an issue, 12 for $1.00.* Promising newcomer.

I C E—Hal Shapiro, 790th AC/W Squadron, Kirksville, Mo. 15c a copy. A good one-shot.

FANTASIAS—David English, 516 Deer St., Dunkirk, N.Y. A straight 15c per issue. Good, but could be a bit neater.

VANATIONS—Norman G. Browne,

[*Turn To Page* 126]

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FIENDETTA—Charles Wells, 405 E. 62nd St., Savannah, Ga. 10c each, 3 for 25c. Neat fun-zine. . . could stand more material.

SI—FIC—Dan MacMurray, No. 1 50th St., Weehawken, N. J. 25c a copy. It could be worth more at half the price.

●

All publications for review should be sent to Calvin Thomas Beck, 8416 Elmhurst Avenue., Elmhurst 73, Long Island, New York. Comments, squawks, and inquiries, should go to Mr. Lowndes, who's interested in seeing your reactions.

Remembered Words

Seems as if whenever we run a fair number of letters from the gals, there's a sizeable block voting the straight female ticket, for that issue. Whether this is sufficient to account for the fact that the February winners were (1) Nan Warner (2) R. R. Anger (3) Marian Cox, I don't know; you may make of it what you will.

Meantime, will the winners kindly step up and call out their selections? Warner has first choice of the originals from the February issue; Anger should list two, in case Nan has already taken the one she likes best; Cox should list two alternates, in case Nan and R. R. have already spoken for her first and second selections.

And, once again, let me repeat that it makes things difficult for all of us if you delay months in letting me know which originals you want.

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The Golden Mirage

(*continued from page 81*)

lacking Dyott's tact, had tried to bull his way through. Still, no matter how exasperating the Indians prove themselves, to hit one is one of the most rash things an explorer can do; for while they can be friendly enough if carefully handled, they will go to great lengths to avenge any injury or insult.

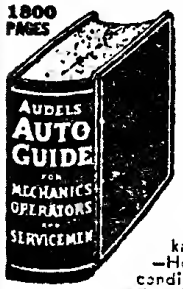
So ended the last great hunt for El Dorado-Atlantis-Manoa. With the rapid opening-up of the Matto Grosso by air, and the increasing attention which the Brazilian government appears to be giving its Indian wards, the remaining unknown patches will not stay unexplored long. There is no compelling reason why such ruins should not exist—though the extreme primitiveness of the present inhabitants is a count against them. The Mayas, after all, built their original cities in the jungles of Guatemala and then abandoned them (probably because they could not, lacking digging-tools, cope with the grasses that invaded their farming plots) and built a whole new constellation of cities in Yucatan, leaving the original ones to moulder.

But, by now, the Matto Grosso has been flown over enough so that if such cities existed they would probably have been seen. What slim chance there is of any such relics decreases with every year; so if you wish to hunt for a lost city there you had better hurry. Be sure, however, that you know what you are doing, if you do not wish to share the fate of Fawcett!

*P. H. Fawcett, "Explorations in Bolivia", in *The Geographical Journal*, XXXV, No. 5 (May 1910) p. 522.

**P. H. Fawcett, "Penetrating the South American Jungle", in *Travel*, XXVII, No. 3 (July 1916) p. 62.

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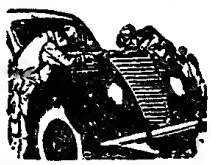
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Edgar Allan Poe — Ancestor

(*continued from page 74*)

Poe meant those remarks. As a matter of fact, he believed them so fervently that it is strange that he wasn't termed a "self-hack" by his contemporaries. The following poems express his belief in the poetic beauty of a dead woman: "To Helen," "The Sleeper," "Lenore," "To One In Paradise," "The Raven", "For Annie", and, of course, "Annabel Lee," which was probably inspired by the death of his wife.

This same fundamental idea is used quite effectively in many of his prose tales: "Ligeia" (in which both a dream-wife and a real woman die), "The Fall of the House of Usher" (in which the woman wasn't quite dead when entombed—but everyone makes a mistake once in a while, and "Eleanora" (a beautiful little prose poem). Incidentally, "The Fall of the House of Usher" contains a fantastic poem called "The Haunted Palace" which is supposed to have influenced a poem by Longfellow. In fact, Poe outrightly accused Longfellow of plagiarism, and Longfellow reiterated that Poe copied from him. The writer is not aware of the ultimate outcome of the battle, but it is obvious that "The Haunted Palace" is strictly Poe's type of material.

POE WAS an unusual part of American Literature; his personal life was as tragic as the material he composed. Because of his intense craving for alcohol, and his inability to hold it, he was a failure in every position he obtained. He lived in poverty at all times, and often had to rely on his friends for sustenance. But, even so, Americans should be proud of this strange man who directly affected the future of the short story; who, in reality, moulded into shape the fantasy and science fiction story of today. He possessed a mind which was, indeed, "Out of Space—out of Time."

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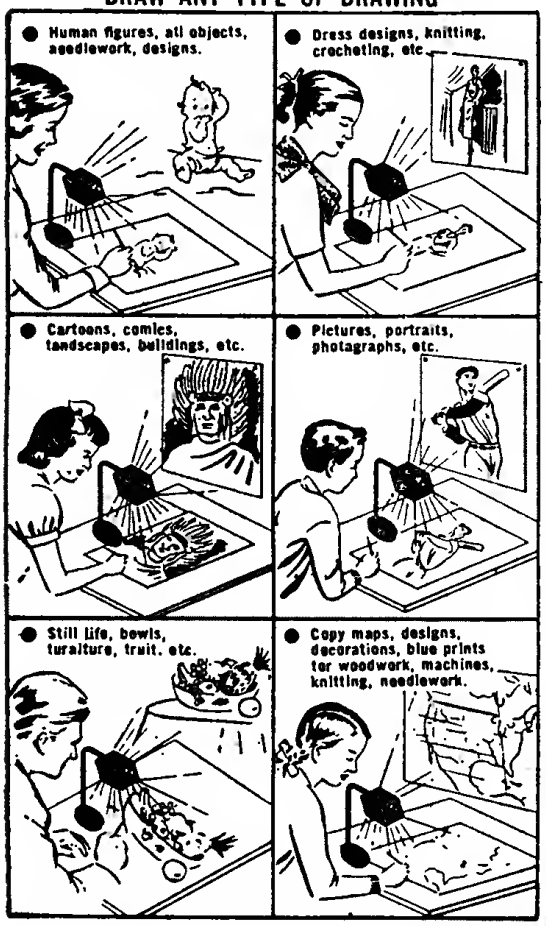
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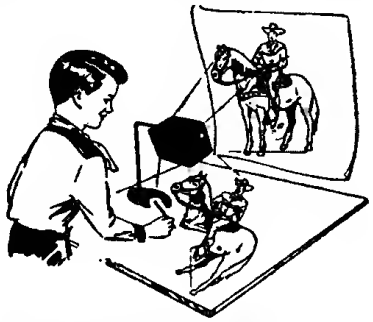
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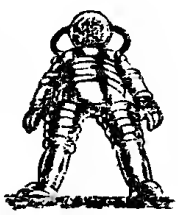
A Report on Your Votes and Comments

We have a peculiar situation, in that the story which received the most first-place votes — nearly 50% of the ballots and letters so listing it — came out behind a story which received considerably fewer prime-ratings, but which all save three voters put up near the top. For the curious, the point-scores on the first two items were 3.16 and 3.50 respectively; but I think the fairest way to score them is in a tie, without consideration of those scores. We have another curious situation in the case of the Abernathy short-short, where a number of voters who listed it in last place, or specified dislike, stated they did so solely on the grounds that there should have been more to it — it was too good an idea, they felt, to have been given the capsule treatment. So, while the score is low for Abernathy, you can also mark down an editorial error on your chart; by the results, we should have suggested that the author make more of the tale. Here's the final record:

1.	**Escape Valve (Dye)** *tied with* **Dugal Was a Spaceman (Gibson)**	
2.	**The Green Thumb (Anderson)**	**3.69**
3.	**Aristotle (Christopher)**	**4.58**
4.	**A Little Knowledge (Merril)**	**5.08**
5.	**The Great Charlatans (de Camp)**	**5.72**
6.	**The Four Commandments (Abernathy)**	**6.25**
7.	**Shoo Fly! (White)**	**6.75**

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★ **Number these in order of your preference, to the left of numeral; if you thought any of them bad, mark an "X" beside your dislikes.**

—1. Intermission Time (Jones)
—2. She Called Me Frankie (Ottum)
—3. The World She Wanted (Dick)
—4. Lifework (Abernathy)
—5. The Mud Puppy (Bailey)
—6. Time Goes To Now (Dye)
★ —7. The Visitors (Liddell)

Did you like the article, "Edgar Allan Poe — Ancestor"?

Did you like the article, "The Great Charlatans"?

Who are your nominees for the three best letters in "It Says Here"?

1 2 3

General comment

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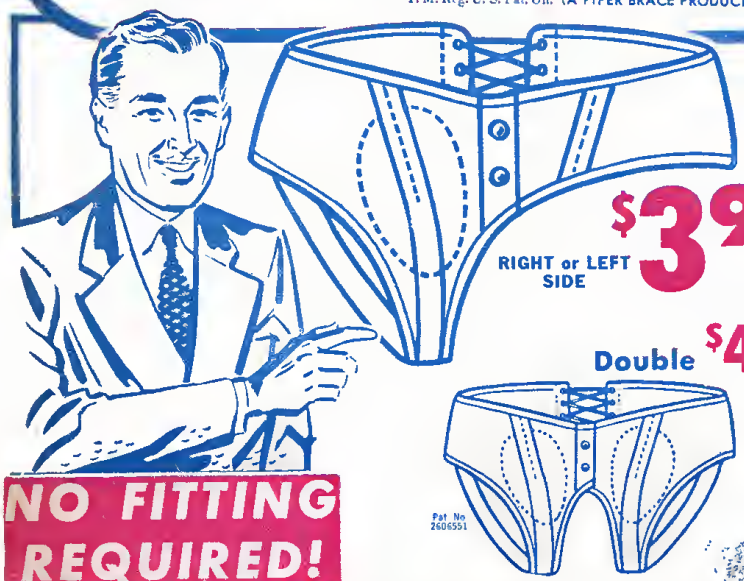
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